

# ECLECTICISM vs. ALLOPATHY.

BY

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# Eclecticism vs. Allopathy.

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**E**CLECTICISM in Medicine is one of the numerous phases of progress in the domain of modern scientific thought. The history of this medical reform dates back only a few more than fifty years, though the causes which gave rise to the movement were operative long prior to its inception. At different times during the early centuries of the Christian era there were physicians, dissenting from the generally accepted doctrines of the then existing schools, who styled themselves Eclectics, though little seems to have been accomplished by such endeavors, and it has been reserved to our own enlightened age to consummate the noble aspirations of those early reformers. Eclectic is a word of Greek origin and signifies, "I select." The most important application of the word has been in the domain of philosophy where it has been applied to a class of philosophers, who were not content with doctrines of any existing school, but who constructed a system of philosophy of their own by selecting from the doctrines of schools those which were most nearly in harmony with truth and reason, rejecting those which seemed fallacious, and supplying those necessary to make their system complete. Eclectic philosophers did not ignore the existence, nor minimize the importance of that which was true in the other philosophies, though they regarded every existing system as incomplete and darkened by much that was fallacious, and labored with a sincerity of purpose for the construction of a system which

should contain the maximum of truth and the minimum of falsity.

It would be interesting and instructive to record some of the more important results accomplished by the early Eclectic philosophers, though reference to a few of those of more modern times will suffice in this connection. For twenty centuries prior to the birth of Copernicus there had existed multiple diverse and conflicting theories, concerning the relative position, importance and movements of the planetary bodies. Astronomers were divided in their opinions on these matters, some teaching that the earth was the center of the universe, and others that the sun was the center around which all the other heavenly bodies moved. Copernicus carefully studied the various theories then current concerning the planetary system. He discovered that each of these theories contained much that was true, and that each was imperfect because of the demonstrable fallacies which were incorporated in each. He at once set to work to construct a system of astronomy which should contain all that was true in all the others without that which was fallacious. The result of this reform is the Copernican theory of the universe, a theory which has withstood the scrutiny of scientific observation for nearly four hundred years. When William Harvey rejected the theory, in the sixteenth century which had been current up to his time, that the principal function of the arteries in the body was that of air tubes, and substituted his own, that the arter-

ies were vessels through which the blood circulates, he was acting from a truly eclectic spirit. The science of botany, as it exists at the present time, is purely eclectic in its origin. It is the classification of Jussieu as constructed by him during the latter part of the 18th century. He rejected the classification of Caesalpinus, Ray, Morrison, Rivinus, Tournefort and Linnaeus, not as being wholly false, but as being very imperfect. From his predecessors he selected what was true, to which he added the results of his own labors, thus giving us the first complete classification of plant life. Many more examples might be adduced to show that this principle of selection, as implied by the word Eclectic, has been the one by which the various sciences have been brought to their high state of perfection. Eclecticism in medical science is a reform movement similar in its intent to the eclecticism of the older philosophers.

It is not destructive in its tendency, as has been often charged, save when the object upon which it became operative was based upon error, and then it has not acted like a madman by simply tearing down, but it has overthrown that it might build better. It has not ignored the existence of other systems of medicine, neither has it disregarded the rational and true in such systems, but, as with the older philosophies, it has regarded the other systems as imperfect and incomplete, and has sought with an equal sincerity of purpose to construct a system in harmony with the highest dictates of reason, and in keeping with the principles of humanitarianism. It has cheerfully acknowledged the fact, that there was much that was true in the other systems, and boldly asserted that in them was much that was fallacious and destructive. With this condition of medical science it has dealt honestly and without prejudice, in the construction of a system which should contain the best in all others, without that which is false and harmful. It has not been content simply to compile the best from all other systems, but it has merited for itself distinction by its careful and untiring investigation of the medicinal virtues of the vegetable kingdom. The medical properties of the majority of vegetable remedies now in use (and they constitute the greater number of medicines used by all schools,) have been discovered and

introduced into practice by the reform schools of medicine. For this, Eclectic physicians are often called Botanics, though the name is misused in this connection. The charge is often made against Eclectics by the ignorant and unscrupulous that they are averse to, and do not use, any medicines from the mineral kingdom. The accusation is without truth as any one may be convinced by a perusal of our literature. We do claim to make a more extensive use of vegetable remedies and a less extensive use of mineral agents than the physicians of the allopathic school. This difference does not arise from a prejudice against the proper use of mineral agents, but because experience has shown that vegetable remedies are equal, or more efficient for the same purposes, and are attended by less danger in their administration. It is not to be inferred from this that they are impotent in their action when taken into the stomach, for many of them are active poisons, and may be made to do irreparable injury if improperly used. What is claimed for them is that as a class they are more palatable, are less dangerous in their action upon the organism, and are more efficient for good.

Exception is taken by many to the word Eclectic as applied to this school, claiming that the principle which it signifies, is not permissible in medical science.

The adherents of the school are not wholly content with it, though it more nearly, than any other, embodies the principle upon which the system is founded. In the exact sciences, as mathematics and astronomy, no such principle of selection is permissible, because in these, there are no parts that can be selected as true and others false, because they are all equally true. But in the speculative sciences, as medicine and theology, this principle of selection is not only permissible, but demands recognition from the unprejudiced and unscrupulous investigator. When medicine becomes an exact science (which it never will) there will be but one system of practice, but so long as there remains so much that is speculative and uncertain, just so long will there be differences of opinion as expressed by differing schools.

In like manner when theology becomes an exact science (which it never will)

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there will be but one school of theology, but one religious dogma as expressed by a mode of worship universal.

But so long as there remains in the domain of theology so much that is speculative and uncertain, just so long will there be opposing schools of theology with their multiple conflicting and diverse practices. With an exact science there can be but one school, and in proportion as differing schools exist in any science, so is the amount of that which is theoretical and chimerical embodied in their doctrines. The charge is often made against the members of the reform schools that they lack that thorough medical training possessed by graduates of the allopathic school. A brief consideration of this matter will reveal the false and irrational nature of the accusation. The greater number of studies, entering into the curriculum of a medical course, are positive sciences and upon these there exists no diversity of opinion or teaching in the opposing schools of medicine. In this class may be mentioned those of anatomy, physiology, chemistry, botany, surgery and obstetrics. There are no conflicting theories regarding the anatomy of the human body because every part is subject to positive demonstration.

Consequently all schools teach the same anatomy, and as the same facilities exist for all, no one can reasonably claim any superiority in point of learning, in this department.

There is no conflict of opinion between the differing schools upon the fundamental laws of human physiology, all teaching the same doctrines, and all equally well informed in this science. There is but one chemistry and that the chemistry of Nature. All schools teach this same chemistry, with the same facilities for experimentation and demonstration, and each is equally conversant with the laws of the science. There are differences of opinion regarding minor points of chemistry, and also of physiology, though the most important laws of each are positively known. The differences of opinion existing are those of individuals and have no connection with schools.

There is but one botany and that the botany of plants. At the present time there is but little conflict of opinion as to the proper classification of plants, all teaching the same, all enjoying the same facilities for instruction, and all possess-

ing an equal degree of learning in this branch of science. Surgery is a department in which there exists great diversity of opinion as to its principles and practice. It is more of an art than a science, and no school can lay claim to any thing especially distinctive in this field of professional activity. There exists no such thing as an eclectic system of surgery, or an allopathic or homœopathic system of surgery. The respective [schools each have many surgeons, though they can not be regarded as sectarian in their practices. There exist as great differences between the practice of surgeons of the same school of medicine, as between the latter, and those of an opposing school.

For any school to lay claim to distinctive merit in the domain of surgery, when the same facilities for instruction have existed for each during the last half century, is idle and puerile. In the departments of pathology and diagnosis, the only differences of opinion existing, are those of individuals and not of schools.

The same principles in each of these departments are alike accepted by all schools. Thus far the schools are alike in their doctrines and teachings, and I imagine that the reader is already surprised to learn that there is so much in common between the opposing schools.

It is when we come to consider the next and most important department of medicine viz. : the administration of drugs for the cure or alleviation of disease that we find the various schools diverging in their doctrines and practices. It is painful to think of the violent opposition and persecution that is exercised by the allopathic against the reform schools, in their honest and painstaking endeavors to improve the practice of this department, which all are agreed is yet in a very imperfect state. It would seem that any system, which promised relief from the imperfections and uncertainties of the old, would be hailed with delight by this enlightened generation. Innovations in every department of science and in every age have been met with unjust and cruel opposition by the conservative element of the dominant schools and often to their abasement. The study of every other department of medicine is preparatory for, and minor to, the giving of drugs for diseased conditions, and though the members of a school be thoroughly conversant with

the principles of anatomy, physiology, chemistry and the other branches of a medical course, and fail to inform themselves upon the properties of drugs, their action upon the organism and the indications for their use in disease, they are but poorly qualified to practice their profession. The violent opposition which the dominant school exercised against the Eclectic school, at the time of its inception, was based upon the assertion that there existed no cause for such a reform. To this assertion those early reformers took exceptions on two different points. The first of these was the apparent lack of confidence which the most learned of the old school had in the efficacy of drugs, as by them administered. The second objection was based upon the deleterious methods utilized by the dominant school for the cure and alleviation of disease. In support of the first objection, we will introduce the testimony of a few of the most eminent members in the old school both in Europe and America.

In discussing the question of the science of therapeutics in 1852, Wunderlich said: "Instead of exact observations, we nowhere see anything but hastily taken notes; instead of demonstrated principles, we have mere notions; instead of a strict exposition of the cause of effect we have useless definitions *words void of sense and meaning*. That is what we find everywhere."

Prof. Haecker said: "We do not know what is disease, how remedies act, and still less how disease is cured. We must abandon the way which has thus far been followed."

Richter:—"No science contains so many sophisms, errors, dreams and lies as medicine."

Schoenlein:—"Since the time of the Greeks and Romans, medicine has made no progress, or hardly any. It should be reconstructed upon an *entirely new basis*."

Magendie, one of the greatest physiologists of the century said:—"If I dared to say just what I think, I should add that it is chiefly in the service where the medication is the most active and heroic that the mortality is the greatest. Gentlemen, medicine is charlatanism."

Prof. Grogery of Edinburgh said:—"Medical precepts in most cases are veritable absurdities."

Dr. Mason Good writes:—"Medical

science is a literal nonsense, medicines have destroyed more lives than war, famine and pestilence combined."

Trousseau:—"Therapeutics and materia medica are, in our day, in a chaos of transition."

Virchow, the greatest among pathologists many years ago said:—"We have no rational therapeutics."

Niemeyer said:—"We must really agree with Bamberger, who thinks that the greater number of patients, who die of endocarditis even, have succumbed not to the disease, but to the remedy."

One of the commission appointed to revise and improve old school therapeutics, in 1865, wrote to the *Medicine de Vienna*: "We are working hard on the Tower of Babel of therapeutics. What one gives in large doses another gives in small doses. This one extols a remedy which is despised by another. A confusion, a contradiction, a chaos without a parallel,—and all this changes every year, aye every month."

Wunderlich said to his pupils one day: "Gentlemen, there is such a chaos in our therapeutics that we ought to be thankful for any good advice, whether it comes from an old woman, a shepherd, a blacksmith or even a homeopath."

The witty and sarcastic Girtamier said that the medical man of his day was like a blind man with a club, striking vaguely in the dark. If he missed the disease as he was very likely to do, he was very likely also to hit the patient.

Dr. H. C. Wood, one of the highest authorities in our own country said:—"What to-day is to be believed, is tomorrow to be cast aside,—certainly has been the law of advancement and seemingly must continue to be so. With what a babel of discordant voices does medicine celebrate its two thousand years of experience."

More citations could be given were it deemed necessary, but sufficient have been given to show the entire lack of confidence in old school therapeutics of the past, among those of its members most eminent as authors and teachers, and to substantiate the position of the medical reformers. It must be apparent to the reader that the therapeutics of the old school was in a chaotic and confused state when the Eclectic school came into existence, and we agree with Wunderlich, that knowledge from any source should have been thankfully received. Whether or not it was, can best be answered by

those men who suffered social and professional ostracism, and the most cruel and relentless persecution from this same dominant school—the advancement and improvement of which was their only crime. This innovation suffered the same cruelties which have attended all great reforms, and like many others, it has lived to accomplish that whereunto it was sent. The second primary object of the Eclectic school was the correction of certain destructive methods made use of by the old school for the cure or alleviation of disease. The philosophy upon which this objection was based, was, that if nature could not be aided in her efforts to restore health, nothing should be done by the physician that would lessen the patient's chances for recovery. That there were practices common, at that time, which did this latter thing, no intelligent person at the present time will deny.

Among the most destructive of these practices I wish to make particular mention of three, viz.: blood letting, the abuse of mercury and the extensive use of depurants, *i. e.* agents that act on the skin, kidneys, stomach and bowels. There were many lesser abuses such as the giving of enormous quantities of drugs; the neglect to observe proper sanitary conditions; the discarding of water as a beverage in fevers; the neglect of vegetable remedies, etc., but the first mentioned deserve special attention. The practice of blood letting as a means of cure was the one in particular which it was the mission of this reform school to correct. At the time that Eclecticism became a distinctive school of medicine, the practice of bleeding was so common as to be resorted to in every emergency, and was supposed to be a panacea for all human ills. It is recorded as a fair presumption that the father of our own country was greatly hastened to his death by the excessive abstraction of blood at the hands of his medical advisors, and they were doubtless among the best medical men of their time. At the time of which we write physiologists had proven that the blood was of vital importance to the welfare of the animal economy. That with blood in sufficient quantity and of good quality there was abundance of life and activity. That the loss of a certain amount of this fluid meant impairment of the vital powers, and perhaps death to the individual.

These and many more facts seem not to have suggested to the physician, the paramount importance of this fluid in the diseased, as well as the healthy condition. That these facts could have been overlooked seems almost incredible at the present time, but that they were continually discountenanced, and the lesson which they taught ignored until there arose a few possessed of sufficient intelligence and boldness to perceive the fallacy of the custom and raise their voices in favor of the suppression of the horrible practice, is a matter of history. The few were those who founded Eclecticism in medicine in its modern aspect. The opposition which they encountered in their noble endeavor has had no parallel in any other department of modern science. They were indomitable and defiant, strengthened by the power of the humanitarian principle before them, and continued to cry out against the evil practice until it was finally and forever abandoned. In the light of the present time no one doubts but that the lives of countless multitudes have been prematurely sacrificed because of this evil practice.

Its supporters argued that in fevers especially there was too much life, that there was too much blood, and the method of cure should be to lessen the quantity of the blood in the vessels and consequently the amount of life. That it lessened the amount of life, often leaving none for the individual, can not be denied. That there is often a sense of relief following bleeding, gave greater currency to the practice, so long as the later consequences were not taken into consideration. Every intelligent person now scoffs at the idea of bleeding as a means of cure.

The founders of Eclecticism maintained that any method of procedure which directly or indirectly lessened the patient's vitality was an evil practice, and one to be avoided in the management of the sick. They very correctly considered blood letting as one of these procedures and opposed it with tongue and pen. If the individual, when in a healthy condition, required the full amount of the blood for the carrying on of the processes of life, they could not understand why he did not the more need it to carry on these same processes, and also to recuperate life's forces when in a depressed condition as in disease. It was said

that in disease, the blood contained impurities which were in part removed by the direct abstraction of blood; but the reformers maintained that in removing the poisons, in this manner, the blood itself, so much needed at this time, was also removed, and that, in proportion to the amount of blood taken, was the life impaired, and in this manner could be wholly destroyed. The discontinuance of the practice is the best evidence that it was an evil one.

Another prevalent custom at that time, and one which they opposed with almost equal vigor, was the extensive and indiscriminate use of violent depurants, or those agents acting on the skin, kidneys, stomach and bowels. These were often very similar in their results to the direct taking of the blood from the vessels. They were attended by the same devitalizing tendencies, though usually in a lesser degree. They were attended by the additional evils of profoundly disturbing the digestion and assimilation of food, and in this way prevented the entrance into the blood of those nutritive elements which were lost by the taking of the blood from the veins. While bleeding only lessened the quantity of the blood, the giving of drastic depurants lessened both the quality and quantity of the circulating fluid. Both processes tended to the same results, viz.: lessening the patients vitality and consequently his chances of recovery. The following couplet well describes the practice at the time of which we write:

"I puke 'em, I purge 'em, I sweat 'em.  
Then if they die I let 'em.

While Eclectics opposed the practice of blood letting, as contrary to reason and experiment, and sought to wholly restrain it, they have differently regarded depurants, believing them to hold a very important position among curative agents when properly administered. They opposed the *use* of the former and the *abuse* of the latter. In both instances success has attended their endeavors.

The third of the great evils to which these reformers turned their attention was the extravagant and dangerous use of mercury. It was a drug more commonly used, and for a greater diversity of purposes perhaps, than any other then in use. As with the preceding methods of cure, this drug was used indiscriminately in almost every variety of disease, and far too

often with the most direful results, as many yet living may attest because of the suffering and injury which they sustained from the reckless use of the drug. Like other drugs in common use, mercury may be made to answer a useful purpose in practice, but that great injury has resulted from its abuse none will dispute. Mercury is in common use in all schools of medicine at the present time, though the method of its administration has been so modified that little harm is now resulting from its use. Many persons, and among them physicians of the old school, believe that Eclectics do not use mercury, but in this they are mistaken as our literature will show, though we do not use it extensively.

As briefly stated in the preceding pages, these were the causes of the disruption in the medical world a half century ago. The results have amply proven the justice of the cause, and there are few, who will have the temerity to deny the assertion that great good has come out of this reform movement.

There are many, while admitting the above remark, who argue that Eclecticism has accomplished the objects whereunto she was sent, and should cease to exist. That she is now doing nothing and has no mission to perform. That all schools are Eclectic in the sense that they choose the best from all sources. To such we invite a rigid comparison of the principles and practices of the two schools. Let him, who now believes himself to be Eclectic, study the Specific Diagnosis and Specific Medication of modern Eclecticism and then ask himself the question. Aside from the accomplishment of the primary objects of the school, she has made great advances along the line of direct or specific medication. Eclecticism of to-day is a great improvement over the Eclecticism of fifty years ago, and is as much in advance of the dominant school as it was then. One of the prominent features of Eclectic teaching, especially during the last quarter of a century, has been the importance attached to the careful study of the symptoms of disease with a view to the discovery of that particular drug, which would cure or relieve this disease. The early Eclectics were content in their efforts to abate the evil practices of the dominant school, and accomplishing this, they trusted to their successors, the developments which have since been made.

The following is one of the most prominent differential features of the two schools in their study of diseases. The dominant school has always persisted in the study of disease in its totality, as pneumonia, pleuritis, peritonitis, etc., with a view to the correct naming of the disease, while the Eclectic school has not been content with this, but has maintained that all disease should be more closely analyzed, and its distinctive symptoms pointed out, not so much that the disease might be correctly named, but that a proper course of treatment could be prescribed. While we do not ignore the name of the disease as charged by the opposing school, we do assign to it a minor importance, giving precedence to the symptoms manifest. We do not treat names of disease but rather the symptoms present. Eclecticism teaches its disciples to give particular attention to the symptoms of disease, not with the view primarily of being able to name the disease, but more especially that they may be able to select the drug or drugs which experience has taught will cure, or alleviate, the symptom or symptoms present.

We desire to be able to name the disease, whatever it is, but not that such name is to guide us in the selection of our medicines.

The dominant school teaches its adherents to note the signs and symptoms of disease, not so much with a view to the proper selection of drugs for a cure, but rather to be able to correctly name the disease, as typhoid fever, measles, scarlet fever, etc. When this is done it relies upon a method of treatment, *said* to cure the disease, without recognizing the fact that there are multiple varieties of these diseases and that each requires a distinct and different treatment for each variety. This is a fatal weakness, apparent to the least observing.

The greater certainty and safety of the Eclectic practice may be observed in the fact that its adherents do not prescribe for names of disease, and may, without positively knowing the name of the disease, direct a course of treatment very successfully by observing the symptoms present.

Eclectics desire to know the name of the disease, but place their reliance in the symptoms present. It may be proper to

remark that the physician is very often at a loss to assign, with certainty, a name to the diseased condition with which he is dealing, and if he has nothing else to guide his selection of remedies, it is apparent that the treatment is a matter of great uncertainty and not wholly unattended with danger to the patient. It may be a disease of an unsuspected part, as the heart, while his treatment is directed to some other part which he thinks is affected, and in this way no benefit and perhaps injury results to the patient. Or it may be a certain disease of an organ, the liver for example, while he believes it to be another disease of this organ and directs his treatment to the supposed disease to the neglect or injury of the existing trouble. These illustrations could be carried to an indefinite number, but the few given will show the existing difference between the schools and the weakness, uncertainty and dangers of the method of prescribing for names of disease, as followed by the allopathic school. Eclecticism teaches that disease, like all other natural phenomena, has a language, and that symptoms and signs are its vocabulary. That all perversions from the normal condition are attended by constant and unvarying symptoms, and that the nature and degree of such perversions are best known by the symptoms manifest. That every time a drug is given it shall be in response to a demand made by the symptoms present. That where nothing especial is indicated, nothing is to be given, or at least nothing that can prove harmful. The question is often asked: How do you know that a certain symptom demands a certain drug, and that other symptoms demand other drugs? The answer is, by experience only. There is but one way to learn the action of a medicine upon the organism, and that is empirically, or in other words, by experiment.

The charge of empiricism has often been made against the reform schools by the old school, and we have no desire to deny it. We acknowledge that what we know of the action of drugs, when taken into the body, has come to us by way of experiment, and much of it by accident. But we deny that the old school has come by its knowledge through any other source. What they have not learned in this manner, they do not know, and it is puerile and silly to lay claim to other

sources of knowledge. There are no reasons other than experimental, to believe that castor oil or epsom salts will produce purging; or that apomorphia, or lobelia will produce vomiting; or that jaborandi or asclepias will increase transpiration; or that acetate of potash or niter will increase the secretion of the kidneys; or that cocaine will produce local insensibility of the tissues; or that any other remedy will give rise to a certain result. We know these results by experiment only. We claim that the relation between symptoms and drug action is constant, and when we have determined that a certain symptom will be relieved by a certain drug in a given condition, we have determined this relation for all time and under all circumstances. The symptoms calling for aconite will be relieved by this drug regardless of the nature of the disease or the part affected, A half dozen or more different diseases, presenting the symptoms calling for a single remedy, would each get this remedy and with equally good results in each case.

This is the chasm separating the two schools at the present time, and the probability that it will be crossed by either, for many years to come, is without foundation. The adherents of the two schools seem firm in the belief that their own philosophy is the true one, and it remains for coming generations to decide which shall endure, or whether either shall continue to exist. Be it said to the shame of the dominant school, that the spirit of intolerance, which it maintains toward the reform schools, is one of the elements opposed to the unifying of the schools. A complete union I do not think will ever be accomplished. The differences between the schools today are largely refinements upon the doctrines that separated them fifty years ago. The differences then existing have been almost wholly effaced by the concessions which the allopathic school has been forced to make. It may be unkind, though it is just, to remark that the allopathic school has been fifty years in reaching some of the vantage points taken by the founders of Eclecticism, and at the present pace they will yet be many years in reaching others. It is no uncommon occurrence for old school journals at the present time to herald the discovery of a drug, as possessing superior powers over certain conditions,

while the same drug has been used for like conditions by the Eclectic school for a quarter or half a century. Eclectics have ever been progressive in their methods, and as a result there are as great differences between the schools as fifty years ago. The dominant school has seemed to take delight in calling all dissenters from their doctrines irregulars in contradistinction to their own self-styled regular school; but we fail to see in what they are, or have been, regular outside of intolerance and relentless persecution of every advance not made along their line. Surely they are not regular in their practice, for according to their own testimony, besides our own knowledge of it, we know there is nothing more irregular. They derisively ask us what we have accomplished in the way of advancement, whereas, if they would subdue their intolerant egotism and read our literature, they would at once learn that much has been accomplished. As a school we do not profess to be superior in all departments of medicine, nor in the majority, but in the domain of therapeutics we do profess to stand supreme. All are agreed that this is the most important and the one to which all others are subservient. We do not refuse to accept whatever they have discovered that is valuable, and in this we enjoy an advantage which they waive by their refusal to accept the results of our observation. The liberalizing tendencies of the present time are affecting changes in their demeanor, as is evidenced by the desire on the part of many to read our literature. The Eclectic system of practice has a voluminous literature and much of it is finding its way into the libraries of old school physicians. Many of them are reading our books and using our remedies, some openly and others secretly. There are in the United States at present over 12000 Eclectic physicians and as many more of other schools practicing the Eclectic system. The growth of Eclecticism, since the date of its inception, stands as a marvel in the domain of scientific reform, and there is every reason to believe that time will raise the barriers that have impeded its progress in the past, and give it that position in the scientific world which its merit demands.

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