

AN
INAUGURAL DISSERTATION

ON

Abuses of Medicine

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185

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It is evident from the best of historians, that medicine was practiced long before the civilization of Greece; and that it was greatly mingled - with the grossest superstition, and the wildest hypothesis. Being confined, almost exclusively to the care of the priests, who generally entailed the profession upon their eldest sons,

These inheriting the absurdities and superstitions of their fathers, confined the science to the narrow precincts of their own limited views. They had accordingly, fixed days appointed, for the application of all remedies; and then they supposed to be under the influence and direction of some supernatural agency, and like all ignorant and senibarbarous people, they

2

believed that diseases were to be cured by the special interposition, of some superior being; and that religious ceremonies, or forms of worship, were more efficacious in the recovery of health, than any of the most effectual remedies in medical science. Emerging however by a slow and gradual step, from those depths of ignorance and superstition, through a lapse of years, it was at length arranged into a regular science by the learning of Greece, and taught, in the temples of the famed Esculapius. And from this epoch, our best authorities generally state, the dawn of medicine as a science. Homer we think speaks of him as a God of the healing art. His remedies were engraven in durable Tables, which in all probability aided in perpetuating his

3

name to posterity. From this ancient
sage of science and literature, we have
but few names on record, who were much
distinguished for medical science, until
the days of Hippocrates; who was his
eighteenth lineal descendant,

The profession being hereditarily followed
from the days of Esculapius to this day,
Upon this ancient worthy, the Faculty in
general of all ages, as by common consent,
have conferred the enviable name of the
Father of physic,

He flourished four-hundred and sixty
years, before the birth of Christ. He esta-
blished the science upon the firm basis
of reason, and supported many of his
positions upon the principles of fair,
and legitimate deductions. But notwith-
standing; from the imperfect state of many

of the science at that day, he still retained some of the remnants of Egyptian superstition. It was at length transferred to Italy, by Archagatus a Greek, and treated as a science by Cato, who with all his learning and fame, attributed the art of healing, to sorceries, incantations and charms.

Shortly afterwards arose Galen; whose unlimited learning, unwearied researches and indefatigable application, crowned him, with a fame commensurate with the existence of medicine.

After the fall however of Rome, the Galenian authority began to decline; and with its declension medicine soon deteriorated into mere empiricism and quackery. In the lapse of time however this shroud of ignorance was

removed and medicine with the other
 sciences, began again to assume their
 former stand. Shortly after this,
 we find the names of Boerhaave, of Stahl,
 and Hoffman, with a host of others:
 and of still later date, a Cullen, a
 Brown, and a Bichat, who with many
 others, by their learning and abilities,
 have succeeded in establishing the science
 upon a firm, and immutable basis.
 Since the introduction of the Baconian,
 or inductive philosophy, which has been
 properly applied to physical, or natural
 science, in which medicine is included,
 we have many as well attested facts,
 which are as conclusive in their results,
 as the solution of any of the problems
 of Euclid. The broad basis it seems
 which is assumed by this philosophy,

is to take nothing for granted, admit
no proposition in science whatever to
be true, until it has been proved to be
so. As long then (it really seems) as this
course of reasoning, is pursued, and
rightly applied to medicine, it is so long
strictly scientific; and self-evident
facts must be the result.

Medicine, we do contend, has properly
this claim and resting in many
respects upon positions as immovable
and unalterable in their nature,
as a Pythagorean right-angle triangle,
But it is also equally true, that as
literature advances, we have almost
innumerable deductions, drawn forth
from those well tried positions, and
by the aid of science, additions,
and well tried facts, are accumulated;

and medicine upon the principles of science is still advancing,

Yet in this advancement, which has for its object the happiness of the human race, we have too frequently to regret, the many obstructions, which are thrown in its way; which oppress and obscure it, and in many respects materially retard its progress. Some of those evils which are making their inroads upon the profession, and greatly obstructing and retarding its progress; we now propose to notice.

The first; are a well known set of crafty and ignorant pretenders, who are infesting the country, with their roots, their herbs, and their steams, under the self-given appellation, of Root Doctors

- Steam Doctors - Thompsonians and
 a mongrel breed we have, partaking
 something of the nature of both.
 These bold and ignorant pretenders,
 with a stern front and brazen
 brow frequently assume to themselves,
 all the knowledge of the professions
 and even pretend to more, than the
 most scientific has ever yet ventured
 to claim. The knowledge too, of this
 learned and voluminous science, is
 to be acquired by them in a few
 months, with but merely a shew
 of application and study; and in
 such a proficiency as to condemn
 three fourths of the greatest medical
 talent in Europe, which has had its
 growth and progress for near three-
 thousand years, and nine tenths of that,

7

of the United States. What a wonder-
-ful discovery of modern date!

How a few ignorant pretenders, are
able to detect the pernicious qualities,
and detritious effects, of long
reputed venereal agents, is truly
involved in mystery. Almost one
Third of our most potent remedies,
which have borne the test and ser-
-vice of the profoundest science, and
which for ages have been successfully
wielded by skillful hands against
the inveterate attacks of disease, are
by one broad sweep stricken from
the catalogue of medicines, and
condemned without trial or mercy,
as being destructive to the happiness
and health of the human race,
Being as many of them - and -

ignorant, of even their component parts,
 and leading properties, or any of their
^{affinities} or adaptations to disease; how they
 could ever arrive at a knowledge
 of their mode of operation upon the
 human system, or pernicious
 results; except through the influence
 of magic alone, we are unable to
 determine. Yet they condemn them
 with as much boldness and confid-
 ence, as though they knew all
 about them, and with many
 would even warrant the belief
 that they actually knew more about
 the nature of those remedies, than
 the greatest medical talent that
 the world affords. Now does this
 look reasonable. Or rather, is it not
 approaching to the preposterous; or

or absolutely ridiculous, in its degree of absurdity. But from the nature of peculiar circumstances, many are disposed to believe it. And such is the nature of a singular prejudice of many against scientific medicine; withholding their minds, from the proper exercise of their functions, and leading them into such a strange infatuation upon this subject; that they are actually disposed to believe the most unfounded reports, and senseless abuses from its enemies. Of all the professions which have a name or a stand in the world, there is none which is so necessarily defensible, and so much exposed to the merciless abuse of unblushing pretenders, as the science of medicine. Being in many respects occult in its

nature, and profound in its claims; its knowledge of course is confined to the few; and unfortunately for our country it is but too few.

We have many who are professedly Doctors; but comparatively few, who have any just claims to the distinguished name of scientific physicians. But sore as this evil really is, and as much as it is truly to be regretted; such must be the state of the science as long as its present obstructions continue to exist; and due rewards are withheld from true worth and merit.

Those publick evils however, under which modesty and worth have often repined, are owing more we are persuaded, to a misconception of

the publick mind, than any intentional disparagement of true worth and merit,

But these evils are to be corrected, only by the Faculty, asserting their claims, exposing those absurdities, and showing to what depths of art and hypocrisy, many would have the community, their willing dupes. In order that we may see what acquisitions are absolutely indispensable to entitle one to any just claims of the knowledge of medicine, we will briefly relate its leading branches. First Anatomy which treats of the organization and structure of the human form. Physiology which teaches the science of life and the laws which regulate it through the various functions

of the system, Morbid Anatomy which is closely connected with the two former, and exhibits the various alterations of structure effected by disease.

The Theory and Practise of medicine, which investigates the cause and symptoms of all morbid affections, and teaches their treatment and cure. Materia Medica which treats of the virtues and properties of all medicines whether animal vegetable or mineral.

Surgery which explains the art of performing every operation which is practicable and safe upon the human system. Midwifery which instructs in the management of diseases peculiar to females alone. The Institutes of Physic explaining the true method of medicinal

instruction, and treating of the establis-
hed truths of the science and the
manner of comparing the natural heal-
thy state of the system with the various
changes effected by disease.

Chemistry which investigates the prop-
erties and character of all medical
substances; and Pharmaceutic chemistry,
a branch of which directs the method
of preparing them for use

To these we may add Philosophy of
the human mind, Mineralogy, and
Medical Jurisprudence,

. We may not be enable to acquire a
critical knowledge of all those various
branches, but it is all important that we
should have a general idea of their
leading truths.

This being the case, how is it possible

for those to form any correct idea of the most simple branches connected with this science, who are perfectly void of the first rudiments of an education. But as obvious as this inconsistency really is, there are many who enter upon the profession without even the traces of a preparatory education; under the impression, that by remaining a few months in some of the shops of the Lobelians, they will be prepared for all the difficult and arduous duties of the profession.

Now what can be expected of such, upon the most rational conclusions more than flippant boasters and loud trumpeters of their own mighty deeds and the wonderful powers of Lobelia;

Still these are our great reformers,
 who are pouring these perpetual anathemas upon scientific medicine, and especially upon that monster Salome.
 Thus are they who would have the world believe, that they are actually in possession of many safe prompt and effectual means, which the regular faculty are entirely ignorant of, or have not as yet applied to the cure of disease,

But unfortunately for this system of fraud and intrigue, with all its coverings it cannot stem the onward of science, for even ⁱⁿ its exhibition alone, it can but develop its own native deformity, and like the frost work of fancy it will ultimately dissolve into its original nothingness.

When however we take into consideration the state of the publick mind, in regard to scientific medicine, and the facts, and maneuverings, of many, of the propagators of this system of fraud, the mystery seems naturally to solve itself.

These are arch intriguers in many respects and we give them credit for knowing how to conduct it to their own advantage.

In proof of this, we have seen a striking instance in the case of a young man who had been laboring under chronic affections of the liver. He was treated by scientific physicians.

But the disease being obstinate the cure of necessity was tedious.

About the time however that the

disease was being brought to a favorable issue, one of these Thompsonians happened in and with his lobelia and blankets commenced his operations. The lobelia from its nauseating and relaxing properties probably produced a happy effect, and the young man continued to mend as formerly and perhaps something faster.

The cure was at once attributed to the lobelia, which was declared to have specific effects in all diseases of the liver.

From its specific effects upon the liver it was soon confidentially asserted to be a cure in asthma, and consumption, and various other diseases,

Now is this the way to deal with an important science?

Should not such an entire departure from all candour, such a gross violation of all that is decorous and noble in science, and in fact such an aggravation and bare faced imposture, meet with the severest reprehensions?

We should therefore with the true spirit of candour, expose those attacks of whatever shape, grade, or character they may be,

The lives of our fellow beings never should be made the sport of mere whims and tricks, or of a wild delusive fancy. Frequently they are in a good degree committed to the care of the physicians. He often has to stand by the bed side, between the

grasplings of some powerful disease,
and the apparent approach of death.
The scene is momentous and the stake
responsible.

To well know facts, and well
triumph truths, we must then advert.
All our knowledge be it more or
less, and all the faculties of our
minds must be brought to bear.
The powers of the judgement,
should be concentrated upon the
phenomena, that are then present.
A speedy and final dissolution is
threatened, and can only be pre-
vented by the restoration of proper
order, upon the principles of scien-
-ce. What then should we do with
Kootism Thompsonianism or mongrel-
-ism.

Should we suffer, our reason dethroned, and be driven from the last retreat of hope in this perilous and momentous hour; when the life of a fellow being is in jeopardy and the issue perhaps depending upon our skill and judgement,

Should we then be moved by capricious whims or fanatical delusions, or drawn from our post by the machinations of heretic pretenders? Humanity forbids it, All honesty forbids it, and a just and proper regard for the worth and importance of the science forbids it.

Nothing should swerve us from the basis of truth; but upon those firm pillars of the science we should rest unyielding at our posts,

amidst all the plannings of an
 empirical plannery, or even the sneers
 and scoffs of malignancy,
 Those who would willingly blind
 and delude, we can but regard as
 ill-fated thorns of an unnatural
 growth, which would goad and
 harass the profession for a time;
 but being incapable of maturity,
 their speedy death is inevitable.

As meteors of the night which have
 originated from the foulness of
 the atmosphere, they can but show
 their flittings for the moment,
 and sink again into their
 original nothingness,

But let even the frown of indign-
 ance, continue to rest upon all such
 attempts at the adulteration, of

Those principles which ages of wisdom
and learning, have established
for the cause of humanity,

Let us hail with the spirit of
philanthropy, the onward march
of all true worth in science,
whose aim is the melioration
of the condition of man, and
whose end is bliss eternal.

Let no sly tricks divert its course
or no rude hand obstruct its path,