

## QUO VADIS

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The time has come to, like Alice, peer into the looking glass. What we see may be as fantastic as the images she reported or they may be realistic; all depends on ourselves. An honest accounting must have some starting point, and I suggest that we begin with the obvious which is that there exists a dichotomy in the pronoun "we." First, there is that methodology which comprises pharmaco-dynamic and homœotherapeutics and all that derives from those methods. Second, there is that organization of physicians calling themselves homœopathic whose knowledge of that methodology varies from the minimal to the maximum possible. In what follows I shall refer to the first as the academic or professional or scientific elements of the dichotomy and to the second as the political. The two elements are not the same or even similar. In fact, historically there has often existed between them a conflict of interest. And it is as a result of that conflict that we, those who are concerned about the future of the professional element, must give some considered thought to the position in which that professional element is to be found as of this date.

No one can refute the fact that the position to which I refer is an unsatisfactory one. But, by the same token, it is not an hopeless one or even one to give despair. The rapidly thinning ranks of the homœopathically instructed physician, the deteriorating status of our teaching facilities, the paucity of replacements and the lack of leadership in the political element are, at first glance, depressing facts. But they may be blessings in disguise.

A century ago Lippe led one political group of homœopaths who were sincerely convinced that the future of that method lay in its developing into a distinct and separate school of medicine, since in that way alone could its integrity and purity be preserved. Hering was equally convinced that homœotherapeutics could

be and should be taught along with all other branches of medicine and in the same college at the same time. The latter policy prevailed, and so certain developments took place which could have been predicted. Tremendous sums of money, contributed by appreciative patients and lay organizations, went into the building of schools and hospitals to further "the cause." Special state licensing boards were created. The result was that opportunists by the droves took advantage of the situation and, slowly but surely, gained possession of the hospitals and schools. And in the process a bastard homœotherapeutics was taught. Homœopathic monies were wasted on janitors, building maintenance, salaries and a host of other trivia and items immaterial to the essential objective, the teaching of the development of a methodology. If we can learn an objective lesson from this, the century and the money have not been wasted. But have we learned?

After an absence of nine years from the councils of political Homœopathy I recently attended a meeting of a state society. Represented were the specialists and surgeons who had lived well on the practices of successful homœopathic physicians; others who were motivated by the fact that organized tours under any sponsorship can be lucrative. The general practitioner felt flattered by the attention he received. There was a generally accepted feeling that not everything was as it might be, but it was equally clear that no one wished to or intended to introduce an unpleasant note into the highly convivial proceedings.

There were several speeches with the usual eulogies. There were the customary jokes. Nothing occurred or was said which was of any consequence medically. It might be reported that a paper or two on homœopathic materia medica was read. Identical papers have been read before and have become more of a symbol than anything else.

One of the leaders urged that the members continue their loyalty to the society if only because of the meals and the fellowship. Such exhortations are repeated in the Elks, the Lions, and the Odd Fellows, and on the same level of appeal. A long-time teacher of Homœopathy, in apparent sincerity and seriousness, suggested that the next atomic-age progress in Homœopathy

might well be ushered in by incorporating several different drugs into a pill within a pill. I am sure that he was entirely unaware of the fact that in making such a suggestion he was exhibiting the most abysmal ignorance of homœotherapeutics which it had been his duty to teach for a quarter of a century. He could not distinguish between pharmacology and pharmacodynamics. As he talked I had visions of a tired old man making a pilgrimage to Munich with an umbrella. One could do nothing else but conclude that with such teachers and leaders the miracle was that Homœopathy, political or academic, had survived as long as it had. Hering phrased an aphorism to the effect that, "Everyone milks the homœopathic cow." Perhaps at long last the cow is going dry. But for a cow to go dry does not mean she is dying. Far from it. When she come in fresh again she may be even more productive than before.

We, as a group, have our forecasters of doom, our hysterical personalities. I cannot subscribe to their song. In my own mind I am convinced that no power on earth can, and no power above wishes to, eradicate homœotherapeutics as an integral and respected part of medicine. But I have an equally strong conviction that it may not, and indeed need not, be a dominant part of medicine. If it has to go out of existence as a political force as it has existed in the past in order to be rediscovered, I say the sooner the better. Such a death to achieve rebirth represents no sacrifice at all.

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