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## HOMEOPATHY.

The value of the homoeopathic system of treatment for disease is one upon which so much difference of opinion exists and so strong a desire for information is felt in many quarters, that we are induced on the eve of the promised visit to Hobart Town, of a practitioner of the system in the person of Mr. Sydney B. Robinson, M.R.C S.L., to reprint the following article on the subject from the Argus of the 9th July last.

It will be very readily understood that we should not make the Australian Medical

Journal a subject of criticism in these columns -without some weighty and imperative reason. The periodical in question is not a very ambitious one, but, except on one or two occasions, it has evinced every sign of being conducted with sobriety and good taste. To the profession itself it should serve a very useful purpose. Though the local field for medical skill is necessarily a confined one, and the chances of medical fame are proportionally few, an intelligent medium of professional intercommunication can scarcely be without a beneficial influence. Beyond its own circle such an organ can have no interest, except on those rare occasions when it courts public attention by the discussion of subjects that are co-extensive with the public welfare. Such an occasion, it seems to us, is now offered by a paper in the

current number, entitled " Homoeopathy in ' High Places." An extract will explain the circumstances which gave rise to it:

" The following letter, which we have received from a gentleman holding a distinguished position in the profession in Sydney, speaks

for itself :

"I send you a copy of the Empire news-paper, to draw your attention to an appointment that has been made by our Government, unknown before in any part of Her Majesty's dominions, viz., that of a practitioner of homeopathy to the important position of visiting medical officer to the Tarban Creek Lunatic Asylum; and further, that the ordi-

nary visitors (this being an extra appointment) have never taken notice of it in the way of remonstrance, or otherwise. Now, sir, I think it but right that such an indignity cast upon the profession should be freely commented upon by the medical press; and as we possess no medical periodical in this colony, I take the liberty of drawing your attention to the circumstance, in the hope you will give us a little of your mind on this subject in your next issue. I have ascertained that the appointment has been made. I may also inform you that our present Minister for Lands, although not a medical man, got his living by this homoeopathic system before his present elevation. Our leading journal, the Sydney Morning Herald, is so tainted with this system, that they refused insertion of a letter on the subject since published in the Empire. The name of the person appointed is Dr. Brereton, the Tur-

kish-bath man."

The writer of the paper, upon this, comments to the following effect :

"While, however, it is impossible not to be conscious of the most unqualified disgust at witnessing this flagrant defiance of propriety, it is certainly proper to ask what course the other medical visitors of the Tarban Creek Asylum propose to adopt. Dr. Douglas, Dr. Boyd, and Mr. Alloway have deservedly enjoyed the esteem and confidence of their professional brethren for many years, and, in order to maintain this regard, there seems to be no course open to them save that of immediately resigning their appointments. Their doing so would be the most dignified mode of indicating their own sense of the affront that has been offered them, and it would very fitly represent the general feeling entertained by the profession on the subject of the monstrous imposture which, singularly enough, finds its most powerful advocates, among the educated and otherwise intelligent."

" We shall be glad to hear that this course has been adopted. It is needless to assure the three gentlemen who have been so pointedly insulted, that the sympathy of the profession in Victoria is entirely theirs, and that the prompt response it is their obvious duty to make, will be hailed by the most cordial and unanimous approval. The increasing social influence of the medical profession throughout Australia demands that it should pronounce decisively and unhesitatingly when the common rights are invaded or its status is attempted to be injured. The apostasy of homeopathy is so exceptional that it would be an easy thing to bring pressure to bear upon any Government that dared to defy the opinion and outrage the feelings of its faithful disciples of medicine, and we trust there will be no hesitation in making this power strongly felt and promptly acknowledged."

And here we consider that the interposition of the public press is called for. What has happened in New South Wales may happen in Victoria. When a government is dared, it is high time to inquire into the nature of the abuse which has provoked the throes of it. The inquiry may possibly expose the insignificance both of the abuse and the threat; but in the abstract that is no reason for superseding the investigation.

And, at the outset, we would have it distinctly understood that we are not pleading the cause of any particular school of medicine, or any sect of practitioners. We do not profess to hold the balance between rival systems; and for our purpose it is not necessary that we should. In our position as public critics we are strictly neutrals—neither heterodox nor orthodox, neither homœopaths nor allopaths. The controversy between the globule and the pill will go on, in spite of anything we could say to allay it. All that we would ask is, that while it does go on, while the question is still in its controversial stage, it should be conducted on both sides in a spirit of fairness and liberal equity.

And, after all, what in the outrage that, even in prospect, has stirred the revolutionary bile of our reviewer to talk the language of treason and threat—the appointment of a qualified medical man to office, who happens to be the disciple of a school that, singularly enough, finds its most powerful advocates among the educated and otherwise intelligent." Qualifications for patronage under a colonial Government, it is true, have never been otherwise than of the most anomalous and eccentric character but this is the first time to our

knowledge that it has been laid down as a rule of conduct to a colonial Government that "education and intelligence" are disqualifying. The principle is somewhat at variance with the eternal fitness of things, but it must be known. I would like to explain many an otherwise inexplicable phenomena. Perhaps a more auspicious moment might have been chosen for its enunciation than that in which "the increasing social influence of the medical profession throughout Australia" is insisted upon. But I return to the point in discussion. Is the apostasy of homeopathy so exceptional that the appointment of a homœopathic practitioner to the position of visiting medical officer to the Talbot Lunatic Asylum becomes a matter for serious remonstrance in the interest of the public as well as that of the profession? We should be sorry indeed, to prejudice a controversy; but it is our duty, where it affects the general interests of the public, to add such comment as may bring it to a speedy and satisfactory issue. The thing to be demonstrated, then, is, the unsafety of the community, in other words, is how a pathy an

unsafe system of medicine is a question, I willingly confess that once, we are not prepared to undertake any qualitative, or quantitative analysis of any medicinal preparation. That is left to the chemists. As a rule, out non-scientific, we must be content to, 9

use the testimony of experience to ground

our judgment on. And here we are forced to, I acknowledge that such experience is not in, B

favor of the "monstrous imposture" theory, setting aside the evidence advanced by its detractors, that "this monstrous imposture, singularly enough, finds its most powerful advocates among the educated and otherwise intelligent," there is large and abundant proof of its being itself on the pretension that homœopathy has, at all events, claims, if not to respect, at least to that indulgence which is usually granted to every branch of science deemed to the benefit of mankind, to the relief of its physical sufferings, and the amelioration of its dependent moral distempers. Homeopathy figures appears to possess all those credentials which Bacon tells us a system professing to be scientific must have. Like Old Medicine, it has its schools and its professors, its hospitals and asylums, can show its organized body of faith, and its organic formula of practice. It has, too—and thus we are forced to own it—a

paramount testimony in its favor—the test of | .success to adduce in its support. It can point | vO statistics which tell ia unmistakable lu« |

g=«"»". "I r I II 11,11 , ?!?! ' ! guage that it has at least fulfilled its mission on earth, and healed the sick. Apparently courting investigation, it can point to illustrious names in science of every department, who have investigated it, and believed, All this, though it by no means confirms the truth,ub it is called, of homoeopathy is yet very strong prima facie evidence that it is not what is meant by a " monstrous imposture.1' When it is taken into consideration, in addition to all this, that its merits have won their own way, have won consent in Rpite of iii apparent anomalies—that the adoption or re-jection of its tenets was purely a matter of free-will; of individual taste or individual tempera-ment, it must be acknowledged that it cannot be altogether a thing of demerit, Mankind do not choose their doctors as they choose their tailors, from a comparatively idle preference for which they eau give no reason based on convie\* tion. They adopt this medicine and reject that generally because the adoption or rejection is a question of vital interest to them, which they are called upon lo decide with a view to the gravest consequences. A matter of life or death is not a question of osthetics, and we may be pretty sure that the selection of this or that system is nota mere whim. In the very nature of things, then wo are forced to own that the success of homaopatby, where it has attained it, is bona fide, and that it has attained success because upon trial it has merited it.

Having assured ourselves of this much, we might, as far as public apprehension is con-cerned, fairly dismiss the case. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, Tho eating has taken place, and the public is content to know that no evil'consequences have followed.

We have, of course, nothing to concern us in the appointment of Dr. Brereton to the Sydney Hospital. Ho may be an ineligible man for the post or be may not. All that we undertook to show, in the cause of justice und logic, was, that it does not follow that he would be an eligible man if he were an allopathist, or that he must necessarily be ineligible, and thei elore treated in a spirit of illiberality.because hois u homcoopathiBt. Such a Bpirit, indeed, hau generally pul sued the progiessists of society, and, to a certain extent and in a certain form, its exhibi-tion is useful. A well-organised opposition to truth, moral or scientific, hue invariably given it an impulse, and if tho pretended truth was only error in disguise, it has invariably exposed it. At the same time there is a principle which should control opposition, und regulato the demenor of opponents.

That principle involves fairness and tolera-tion, a willingness to bear argument, and to admit the value of proof. The violation of this principle, we are sorry to say, has been singularly characteristic of the opposition offered to homoopatliy. As tar as wo can understand, the illiberally we refer to has originated not so much out of personal anti-pathy to homoaopathy in particular, ns in an imperfect apprehension of the nature of

medicine as a science. Medicine is after all purely an experimental science, and in that character is cpen to reform, and exposed to re-volution. Having been the closest and most exclusive of tho sciences, it is easy to see how its adherents should be slow to realize such a condition, and impatient of admitting its operation.

For the reBt, this is not the first occasion that a homoeopathist has occupied a post of public tiust; and since there is nothing to prove m the abstract that homoeopathy unfits a mun for the discharge of his moral obligations to his neighbor or the public, there can be no objection on public grounds at least to any snell appoint-ment. Until such proofs could be offered, pi oofs of incapacity, moral or legal, any objections that could be made could only be urged in a factious spirit, in fact, of persecution and con« servatieui-the spirit which imprisoned Galileo for his astronomy, vilified Jenner for his vaccination, and Harvey for his circulation,scouted Laennec for his stethoscope, laughed at Pulton for his steamship, and denounced the lightning kite of Franklin. Hahucmnnn may or may not be a philosopher; but, on glancing at tho futevf philosophers, the treatment he has received, wo are bound to confess, is strong presumptive evidence in his favor.