

WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH HOMŒOPATHY?

DR. C. E. FISHER, M.D., Chicago

Editor Medical Century,

Last month while visiting my good friend, Dr. Orme, of Atlanta, and while discussing with his wife the times of Holcombe, Bailey and Belden, of Dake, Hardenstein and Murrell, of Schley, Falligant, and other notable pioneers of Homœopathy in the South, and the absence of activity and earnestness in its interests and cause to-day, I was pathetically asked:

"Dr. Fisher, what is the matter with Homœopathy, anyway?"

The next day, while visiting a good old lady of eighty-two years, at Athens, whose husband, father and two brothers had been conscientious and successful homœopathic physicians for a combined period of near two hundred years, and who had been born, nurtured and reared in the faith, and who now in the closing years of her eventful life, is hardly able to find a homœopathic doctor outside the large cities, and even there, but few who practiced as did her husband, father and brothers, most appealingly inquired of me:

"What is the matter with Homœopathy, these days, Dr. Fisher?" "It isn't as it used to be," she said. "Then, when a physician called himself a Homœopath, we knew what to depend upon, but now it makes little difference what he professes to be—the treatment isn't the same."

A week later I spent the night with a physician friend in New York, and in discussing men and things-homœopathic in general, out blurted the question:

"What is the matter with Homœopathy now-a-days? It isn't as it was in the days of Gram and Gray, nor even in the days of Dowling, Helmuth, Allen, Hallock and the rest."

Two days later I was in Chicago, and in going over the work and personnel of the profession of that great once homœopathic city, my warm friend, Dr. Bailey, for so many years registrar of Hahnemann Medical College, when the classes numbered from two hundred and fifty to three hundred, quietly remarked:

"It isn't as it once was, Fisher, with us. Things have changed. We haven't the old interest, the old enthusiasm, the old loyalty, any more. We haven't the preceptors, with their sons and daughters as students, and with the sons and daughters of their patients as students. Things have changed. Something seems to be the matter. What is it?"

An hour later a specialist in Chicago, in rambling conversation, in asking me how things are in my part of the vineyard, voiced almost exactly the same sentiments in almost exactly the same words.

Two days later I was in Minneapolis—you see I have been "going

some" lately—and within ten minutes after having set foot among the doctors in their splendid offices in the magnificent city of the Great Northwest, there came the same inquiry:

"Fisher, you travel about a great deal and see things everywhere. What is the matter with Homœopathy over the country?"

Three days later I was in Washington, and no less a personage than the venerable, versatile, homœopathically virtuous and vigorous J. B. Gregg Custis, in commenting with me on the fact that last year I was compelled to employ eleven young physicians, at \$ 100.00 per month, board and horse-feed for each, and had not been able to get even one Homœopath among the lot, because they were not to be had in Virginia and North Carolina, almost indictingly inquired:

"What's the matter with Homœopathy down your way?"

An thus it is!

From Georgia to New York, from New York to Chicago, from Chicago to Minneapolis, from Minneapolis to Washington, all over, everywhere, by everybody.

"What's the Matter with Homœopathy?"

What is my answer!

Nothing's the matter with Homœopathy!

It's all right, first, last and all the time.

Its law is just as true to-day as in Hahnemann's day.

Its dosage is just as effective now as it ever was.

Its precedents are just as meritorious as they were.

Its results at the bedside are just as satisfactory as in the day of Boenninghausen and Jahr.

Homœopathy as Homœopathy is all right!

But the You, and the We, and the Us of it are at fault.

Just a little comparison, if you will!

Every old school journal we pick up pronounces that the "profession is over-crowded."

Is it so with Homœopathy?

My friends, Drs. Bailey and Aldrich and Custis, will probably answer in the affirmative, in so far as our cities are concerned.

Perhaps 'tis so there. But is it true elsewhere than in the large cities of the country? I am painfully able to answer in the negative.

For instance:

In my railroad hospital work in Western Maryland, forty miles east of Cumberland, I was altogether unable to secure the services of a single homœopathic assistant, but for two years was compelled to employ and work with physicians of the old school only.

Next, in my railroad work in Virginia, with a seventy-two bed hospital and eight young physicians "riding the line" of one hundred and eight miles of tidewater railroad our company was building, I was wholly unable to

secure the services of a single Homœopath, and in my hospital, besides the eight physicians, employed on my line work, I enjoyed a very profitable and pleasant association with a staff of five old school physicians, all of whom gratefully accepted my appointments as a compliment, and all of whom rendered me most valuable surgical assistance during my two years of hospital residence and work at East Bedford. I was even unable to secure the services of a homœopathic surgical interne at this hospital, although I communicated with several hospitals in the North and East upon the subject.

Next, and last, in the hospital service I was called upon to establish in the Blue Bridge Mountains of North Carolina last May, while the hospital in Virginia was still in full operation, I have had to employ at different times seven allopathic physicians and have been able to get but one young Homœopath, he from Chicago, from the Chicago Homœopathic and Cook Country Hospital, and the crudest prescriber I have had on my lists, though from splendid homœopathic stock.

So something must be the matter, in some way, or these situations would not exist.

Take the South, for example!

It was once a mighty stronghold for Homœopathy—the home and field of a dozen giant defenders and promulgators of the faith, men who literally fought, bled, and at times all but died for the glory of their cause. In the frightful cholera epidemic of 1866, these men did not proclaim their Homœopathy good for all the ailments of mankind and womankind—except cholera, yellow fever, diphtheria, and other severe diseases! They waded right in, conscious of the value and power of their guiding principles, and equally confident of the power and value of their tiny little doses of the little white pills, which were the rule those days, and they placed the banner of a straight Homœopathy high on the ramparts as their frightful epidemics were conquered.

When yellow fever, that most dreaded of all the scourges of those days, laid his foul hand upon the fair women and the gallant men of their land they faltered not, nor submissively crept on their bellies to some laboratory door-step and whiningly begged for succour of toxins and the hypodermic, but courageously went forth, by day and by night, where death lurked in every nook and cranny and crevice, where the deadly culex stung and bit and attacked indiscriminately, and whose relation to the battle was not dreamed of and with their little white pellets bombarded the citadels of the enemy and came off more than victorious.

With them it was not that "Homœopathy is good enough for women and children, but when you come to the epidemics we must have something stronger!"

"Die Milde Macht ist Gross," was their dosage slogan.

"Similia, Similibus Curentur," was their battle cry.

And they won victories the like of which we to-day ever thought of.

The "Matter" lies with us.

We are of "little faith".

That the old school has made progress within a quarter of a century that is little short of marvellous is not to be gainsaid.

Nevertheless, it is just as true that Homœopathy outwits it at the bedside as it ever was, and he who sticks to his text need have no fear.

I speak this advisedly.

Not before, in my thirty years of previous experience, had I the chance to compare homœopathic treatment with allopathic, by personal contact and immediateness of observation, as since I have been in my present work.

All my associates and employees have been allopaths.

All of them have been bright men.

Never were there congregated better practitioners or sharper fellows for their years than two-thirds of the "boys" I have been employing.

They have been from the Richmond and other Virginia schools, for the most part, and I want to testify to the thoroughness of the teaching they have had in all the elementary and essential branches, except in therapeutics, and I can even here testify that of their kind that, too, has been excellent.

My hospital staff, also, has been made up of splendid physicians and able surgeons, one with thirty years' experience and two others with five years each, in fields that gave them large and varied opportunity, and in everything surgical I have found them the peers of men of their age and experience in any section of the country.

In the matter of medication, we have spent thousands upon thousands of dollars for the drugs they have been taught to use, not denying them in the least; but as these have been shipped out to the hospital to their headquarters and to the various camps over which they have presided, there have been included a few homœopathic polychrests with simple directions in staple conditions, and I am glad to be able to state that in nearly every instance I have found these young men sending in requisitions, more and more, for the homœopathic medicines.

To such an extent is this true that we now carry a far smaller supply of old school drugs than formerly, and a correspondingly larger lot of my own.

I have not attempted proselyting, in the least.

My library has been open in the hospital office, and I have interestedly watched and noted the interest they have shown in our work on practice.

This interest was at first that of the antagonist, not of the skeptic, next of the inquirer in some case that was not getting along well, and lastly of the doctor who had found results and wanted to know more about something, which in college had always been proclaimed a delusion and a snare.

One of my young men is now "almost persuaded," and speaks of taking

a course in a homœopathic medicines than of his own, and still a third frankly admits that he gets results from some of the homœopathic remedies than he does from any that he has heretofore employed.

Not alone, however, have I this evidence to offer.

In my own work, among men of all nationalities, of whom we had twenty-one of different nations at one time. I have invariably found the straight homœopathic drug the best of all, always in the one-remedy-at-a-time, and in the medium potencies, in all the severer diseases, as typhoid fever, tunnel pneumonia, acute dysentery, and the sepses that all too often follow infection before my surgical cases can be brought to me.

In more than one exceedingly violent or long drawn case of typhoid or of pneumonia I have yielded to suggestions from my old school colleagues and have interpolated drug stimulants or have used adjuvants, but always to my regret; and as invariably as I have come back to the homœopathic similitum have I been rewarded with better success.

The rather unusual courtesy which has been shown me by old school physicians in strictly old school territory, with almost everything savoring of prejudice and intolerance, has caused me to try to be equally courteous and tolerant, and I have attempted to avoid forcing Homœopathy upon them. But it is a pleasure and of some value, I hope, to be able to state that their tolerance of a homœopathic physician has led them to be somewhat tolerant of his methods, and more than once have I either prescribed for them or directed them in prescribing for others, the result being that I look upon this mission-field as an exceedingly inviting one for tactful and capable homœopathic physicians.

The bitter prejudices that existed when first I went South, thirty-five years ago, when medical arguments had often to be sustained at the muzzle of a gun, have largely died out. Times and men have changed. No longer can the allopath sneer at or decry infinitesimals. Only "heroic medication," massive dosage, quantities almost elephantine in size, and crude things of exceeding nauseating capabilities were looked upon as of the value then. But the gentle influences of Homœopathy were all the time subtly at work, and latterly the laboratory has taught the old school to be tolerant, to see strength in small things, to recognize that potency doesn't mean sledges, crowbars and mauls.

The Time is Propitious for Homœopathy.

What are we going to do about it?

We need ten thousand more homœopathic doctors to-day.

Isn't this an exaggeration? Emphatically, "No!"

Every town, village, hamlet and crossroads need them.

They are needed everywhere, especially throughout the South.

Take Virginia alone!

Richmond, with 125,000, a beautiful city, progressive, historical, commercial, attractive! We have just lost Dr. Stone and Dr. Taber, by death.

Each had a splendid practice, each was well-beloved, each was a Homœopath, in deed and in truth. Who will take their places?

True, there are others there, including two or three rather exceptionally good young men, but who will follow Taber and Stone? The others were already there.

Take Roanoke; A beautiful and growing city of thirty-five thousand, the headquarters for the Norfolk and Western Railway, one of the great trunk lines of the South, with but one homœopathic doctor. The people are courteous, tolerant, fair. There are a great many Northerners among them. The city has good schools, fine churches, and a great many attractions. What like city in the North has but one Homœopath?

What is true of Roanoke is true of its rivals—Lynchburg and Danville. Likewise of other cities.

Norfolk is better represented; but with its promising future and with Portsmouth and Suffolk and Old Port Comfort and Newport News right at hand, there should be in the district named, at least, two score of homœopathic doctors, and there would be in any like territory and population in the North or West.

As all over Virginia, so all over the South. There are splendid towns of from two thousand to ten thousand, with country populations of from ten thousand to fifty thousand dealing with them, without a single homœopathic doctor, sometimes not one within a radius of two hundred miles or more.

In these towns and counties the people have been drugged under the crudest old school methods until they are full of "tough nuts" that homœopathic antidotes will cure. A certain clannishness of friendship, marriage and intermarriage, political, social and church relationship exists, quite a bit more than is usual in the North and West; but it needs but a few good results among them to set the prairies on fire, as it were. The fields are here, and they are almost ripe for the harvest.

Who will come among us and do these people good?

We need in the South more Holcombes and Ormes; more Dakes and Falligants; more Murrells and Baileys; more Beldens and Tabers; more Stones and Tydemanns—just as you of the North need more Grays and Grams; more Helmuths and Allens; more Dowlings and Ludlams; more Mitchells and Williamsons; more Joslyns and Pultes.

Homœopathy is just the same.

Homœopathy is "all right".

Homœopathy is just as good to-day as it ever was, and it is just as much better to-day than the very best old school treatment that has yet been given us, than it was better in those pioneers' years than was the blunderbuss methods of their time.

The fault lies in us.

It is lethargy, indifference to our pathy, preoccupation with the whirling business affairs of the times in which we live, a neglect to make students as

formerly and train them for college in the good old homœopathic way, so they will not be contaminated by the allopathic tommyrot of which some of our colleges teach all too much. (Italics—Ed.)*

If we will but awaken to a sense of the mighty responsibilities that rest upon our careless heads and yielding shoulders.

If we will but take advantage of the splendid opportunities which a crowded old school profession and a Homœopathy-needing public now offer.

If we will but vaccinate our systems with the enthusiasm and zeal which characterized our predecessors of pioneer times, the great field of uncultivated territory will yield our profession a splendid harvest of glory and coin, and Homœopathy will prosper as before.

It is not my aim to speak in platitudes.

To deal in hyperbole.

To offer volubility of words with a paucity of ideas.

But to present in a feeble way a plain truth as I am made to see it in getting about over the world, perhaps, more than the average physician.

I see the need of thousands more of honestly homœopathic physicians.

I see that the people want and will employ them.

I see that not alone the pioneers who are passing away, but the pioneer public, who know what Homœopathy was, and believe they know what it should be to-day, recognize our decadence in zeal and effort and want an awakening.

Would it not be worth the while for each homœopathic physician to try to send to our colleges, or to those of them that by their curricula show that they are trying honestly to teach Homœopathy as a scientific and creditable method of practice, at least, one student each year for the next ten years?

I speak for no college!

I speak for no selfish interest!

I speak for the general public!

I speak for the vacant fields everywhere to be seen.

I believe I speak the truth!

—*Medical Century*, May, 1908

* This timely warning of Dr. Fisher was neglected in the U.S.A., and that is the main reason why we find that, these tommyrots in curriculum of homœopathic colleges in America have been successful in stifling out Homœopathy from its most glorious citadel.—*Ed.*