

This article was published in the Proceedings of the Eight Annual Session of the International Hahnemannian Association (1887: 414-418).

André Saine: The following paper was presented in 1887 by Dr. A. B. Knott to the members of the International Hahnemannian Association. He was warning the young practitioners against pretenders. The term "pretenders" was originally used by Hahnemann to identify practitioners who pretended to practice and teach homeopathy but were in fact completely at variance with his teachings. In the nineteenth century it was common for pretenders to try to associate remedies with certain pathologies as it is done in allopathy. These pretenders did not pay much attention to mental symptoms and many of the most characteristic symptoms of our materia medica. The address of Dr. Knott is still very contemporary even though we have to deal less with the materialism as in that time. Today we see pretenders who enjoy speculative materia medica and do not examine the sick in the objective way as taught by Hahnemann. The advice of Dr. Knott to follow the way of the pioneers who mastered homeopathy is wisest and following it will bring the greatest rewards.

A. B. Knott

### Clinical Experiences

Mr. President, and Members of the International Hahnemannian Association, in view of my life-long surroundings, observations and varied experiences—too varied, indeed—as a practitioner, I cannot refrain, on this occasion, from directing my remarks, in a general way, to the practice of Homœopathy; and if I thereby succeed in dropping a word of encouragement to the young practitioner—or the old ones—I shall be amply repaid, and feel that my task has not been in vain.

That Homœopathy is demanding and receiving the earnest attention of the thinking medical world, and is rapidly advancing in popularity, there is no question; and it is not surprising in view of the checkered history of the medical profession, that we are confronted with an army of opposers, in battle array, waging war against the system of Hahnemann.

In this array of opposition there is a class of oily-tongued gentlemen—smooth of speech—who claim to be defenders of the doctrine of Homœopathy, while in truth they are mere spies from the camp of the enemy—seeking to undermine the doctrine of our love. In all their cunning these pretenders seek to lead you astray; they speak fluently and write polished articles for publication, suggesting that the *Materia Medica* of Hahnemann needs trimming and pruning. Some of these very pretenders who, considering the length of time they have practiced, ought to be familiar with the laws of Homœopathy, proclaim that they administered what seemed to be the indicated remedy, and it failed to produce the desired result; they therefore declare they were compelled to resort to a rational treatment. Think of an old practitioner of Homœopathy talking about what seemed to be the indicated remedy, when every sincere Homœopathician well knows that, where the true remedy is properly administered a cure will follow.

Beware of these quacks, they are slanderers of the dead. I regard them as a class of men seeking notoriety and reputation with the least possible labor—imposing upon the profession. They are not willing to fight the battle of life in toilsome study, but want easy sailing. They therefore propose to trim out the *Materia Medica* and its teachings so as to make our labor light.

Let us therefore be careful that we are not led astray by these suggestive gentlemen, but on the other hand let us follow the teachings of the old pioneers of our school, who have fought the

hardest and the longest battles of Homœopathy since the days of its founder—heroes in the profession, both living and dead.

I follow with pride, as nearly as possible, the foot-steps of Lippe, Wells, and the lamented Guernsey, who, during the long line of their brilliant careers, have adhered closely to the text of the great Hahnemann. These men, and other true followers of the Father of Homœopathy, by their incessant toil and untiring energy, have gained the love and admiration of the world.

I believe with these great teachers that Homœopathy is based upon an immutable law—the law of nature—which, if followed to the letter in our practice, as taught by Hahnemann, will unfold to us the secret of curing all curable ailments by the surest and most natural method. I like this system, because it has for its basis nature and nature's laws. It is the only sensible and rational plan known to man.

But let it be remembered, young man, if you would meet with success, you must master an Herculean task, and not expect smooth sailing at all times over the great ocean of Homœopathy; and don't be deceived by our easy, graceful talkers, who would have you believe that the garden of our faith needs much weeding out, before it becomes a reliable, practical school of medicine.

I am convinced, from practical experience, that far greater labor is required to attain success in Homœopathy, than is required in all other systems combined. To use a figure of speech as illustrative of my thought, the student of Homœopathy must be conductor, engineer, fireman and brakeman combined, if he would safely drive his freighted train over the highway of his professional career to the land of blooming health; you may have my idea—four in one or one in four.

Think of the enormous task devolving upon him, when he is required to ascertain and collect all the important complicated and characteristic symptoms, objective and subjective, aggravations and amelioration, together with the concomitants, and the time of their occurrence. In other words, he must take the totality of the symptoms in each individual case, then he must be philosopher enough to arrange and individualize the symptoms thus collected in totality, before he can select the proper remedy. And then, after having the remedy applicable to the case in hand, we must again pronounce him a philosopher should he, even then know how to apply it successfully. The question arises with him, "Where shall I begin, where stop?" To extend my figure of four in one, he must know when to put on the brakes, and see that his patient gets off at the proper station, and is not carried by—to the cemetery.

For a young practitioner to faithfully pursue and carry out this skeleton outline, is a momentous task alone, to say nothing of the general surroundings—the severity of the case, the duration of action of the remedy, and what inter-positions there may be to impede the progress of the action of the remedy, the general physical condition of the patient, together with a thousand other surroundings.

Above all things, a man ought to be honest in his profession, honest with his patrons, honest with the law that he is dealing with, and honest with himself. Remember we must couple honesty with industry if we are to reasonably hope for success.

Let us be sure we are right, and then go ahead, and never lose sight of the fact that the position of brakeman on the train of our journey ranks as high in importance as that of conductor.

Again, I say, let us be honest; if we make mistakes, admit them, and not try to conceal our ignorance by making war upon the law of similars. The moment we make a mistake, let us confess it, and not commence writing articles for journals, proclaiming that we have discovered a fallacy in the doctrine of Homœopathy, and that it needs pruning and trimming.

And, if we are not familiar enough with the laws of Homœopathy to meet with success in practice, let us say so, and not slander the dead.

Now some of my hearers may say, "Who in the dickens are you?" In reply let me say, don't concern yourself as to who I am, but keep straight on in the line of true Homœopathy, and don't do as I have done, for I am sorry to be compelled to confess that I practiced the old butcher system for twenty years, then mongrelism seven years, and finally, in the noonday of my life, opened my eyes to the true doctrine.

And to the young practitioner, let me again repeat my word of warning, do not be led astray by the many upstarts, quacks, mongrels and mugwumps in the ranks of profession, who proclaim by the wayside and on house-tops, that they have weighed the doctrine of Homœopathy in the balance, and found it wanting.

Should the ghost of Hahnemann appear with sword in hand confronting the army of our profession, you'd see these cowardly fellows break ranks, skulk to the rear and hunt their holes, but if you have been honest, you can face that ghostly spirit and like Hamlet, can say: "Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned?" "Be thy intents wicked or charitable?" You can further say: "I have been doing my level best to become a simon-pure Homœopathic doctor, I declare upon my word of honor that I am no mongrel." And as a reward for your devotion and labor, that heavenly spirit will crown you with blessings.

And now in conclusion, dear friends, one and all; my prayer shall ever be, that our industry, honestly and devotion will so wed us to the doctrine of our faith, that when our labors on earth are done, and the stream of time shall have borne our frail barks to the great ocean of eternity, the world will be better for our having lived.