

# SCIENCE

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## "DIVINE HEALING."<sup>1</sup>

ABOUT twenty years ago a half-educated trifle from Germany, babbling, as they all do now, a travesty of undigested "metaphysical philosophy" displayed in a nimbus of religious cant, concerning whom the most injurious reports were circulated and have never been contradicted — this man became the apostle of a large following, and the worthy founder of the most notorious of the "schools" spawning ever since in the shallow waters of "Christian science," and there is of late a pitiful increase of faith, particularly on the part of religious people, in the prayers, promises and neglect of these healers, until cancer, diphtheria, and typhoid are left without challenge or remorse in the control of "Divine Healers," "Christian Scientists," "Faith" and "Mind Curers," and "inspired" persons in all garbs, who advertise variously, while each calls all others "quack."

Here is a "philosophy" which literally insists that there is neither pain nor disease;<sup>2</sup> cancer is an imagination. How patient, after all, are our legislators!

Serious argument against the hypocritical nonsense of these parasites in the medical profession would hardly have seemed called for, — so silly is the silliness, so crazy the craze, — were it not true that their influence is widely and perniciously felt. As keen an observer as Mr. Edward Eggleston has thought the status of "Christian Science" so serious an evil that his last work, "The Faith Doctor," is a strong indictment of its murderous counsels.

Popularity is easily gained, for the dead tell no tales. Christian Science murmurs its experimental prayer over the sick as material, while its triumphal march gathers a noisy ovation from the imaginative, the neurotic, the convalescing, and from certain surgical cases, stiff-jointed, rheumatic, or weak, and simply needing reassurance to take up beds and walk. From New England to the extreme West, towns and communities swarm with the new "practitioners." "The number of these regularly graduated cannot be accurately estimated, but they are numbered by the thousand. Within the limits of one school there are about thirty organized churches, and also one hundred and twenty societies which maintain regular services."<sup>3</sup>

Numerous periodicals make their appeal in such priestly vestments as have never been assumed by *Ayer's Almanac* or the most plausible of the *Guides to Health*. Twenty-three institutes, scientific and metaphysical, are advertised in one periodical.<sup>4</sup>

Here whoever listens becomes a titled practitioner (C.S.) and is "inspired," however brief the course of instruction. "There are about fifty dispensaries and reading-rooms, and

<sup>1</sup> A portion of this paper was published in Boston Transcript, Dec. 21, 1891, in reply to a communication, Boston Transcript, Nov. 7, favoring Divine Healing as "the more excellent way."

<sup>2</sup> "Science and Health," pp. 188, 190, 231, etc. "You say a boil is inflamed and painful, but that is impossible" (231). "Inflammation, tubercles, hemorrhage and decomposition are but thoughts, beliefs" (188).

<sup>3</sup> American Spectator, Dec., 1891.

<sup>4</sup> Christian Science Journal, Jan., 1892.

a rapidly increasing literature for Christian Science; one of the other schools, Mind Cure, has also a large number of organizations similar in character."<sup>5</sup>

Reputable physicians occasionally yield to the importunities of patients, or the specious argument from the assumed standpoint of religion, and endorse the practice of Faith Cure, wholly or in part. Given an inch, an ell is taken, and the fanatical statement has already been made that there exists no opposition to Divine Healing on the part of medical men.<sup>6</sup>

Yet every veracious medical article and authentic report written during the past decade to show the service of air, diet, exercise, baths, or medication, is the enlightened protest of science, i.e., of confirmed and verified experience, in opposition to sensational, hysterical, superstitious pseudo-science.

Concession on the part of any physician to the childish credulity of a bygone age is simply high treason to his noble profession. A medical man who is still conducting cases of successful treatment should reflect upon his ingratitude to Alma Mater, and upon the comment which must greet a step which seems to stultify his own professional life and give support to a dangerous class in the community. His colleagues will, inevitably, question his sincerity and ask for a logical defense.

Religious observances have their time and place, but the Almighty evidently always employs means; the preachers are accepted agents in matters spiritual, perhaps the doctors are the convenient instruments to cure disease.

A disorder so serious, visible, established, and contagious as diphtheria, is not to be left to faith and prayer alone. The writer has never seen a cure wrought by such agency; but he has met with several instances where, in this disease, faith without works has brought about a most disastrous result. Prayer accompanying unskilled attendance in child-bed has proved to be infanticide.

The fact remains (statistics are stubborn) that "The Prayer Test" submitted some years ago was unsuccessful in application, both here and in England, and it is not now referred to by those who so confidently offered it.

Consumption is unwisely chosen as a chief example of the hopelessly incurable, therefore to be abandoned to prayer.<sup>7</sup> Dr. Cullis has here failed to help;<sup>8</sup> the bacteria still defy his methods. But medical science accomplishes very much in this disease, more and more from year to year. Even the removal of patients to antiseptic air and a warmer climate completely cures in many instances. Dr. Burnett recently reported fifty cases of advanced consumption of the lungs cured in England in spite of the climate, and medical authorities are nearly unanimous in promising aid at early stages of phthisis. Why should we, so equipped with books, professional training, experience, and a sense of responsibility toward our fellows, abandon the care of consumption to the pseudo-scientists?

<sup>5</sup> Am. Spectator, Dec., 1891.

<sup>6</sup> Journal of the Evangelical Alliance, Nov. 14, 1891.

<sup>7</sup> Boston Transcript, Nov. 7; Chr. Science Journal, Jan., 1892; Science and Health, p. 188.

<sup>8</sup> In the Consumptives' Home, a large faith institute, located in Boston.

It is most emphatically true, and to be recognized by every thoughtful mind abreast with the currents of modern life, that, underneath all the enormous quackery and folly of the healers, there are certain tendencies in the movement which are true and which have given to it power and influence. An influence early seen among us, and which, we trust, will be perpetuated as a final boon to the sick, was the leading of popular thought, in a hard and sceptical time, into a more spiritual conception of disease. Rightly applied, and by educated persons, such forces in nature as mesmerism (hitherto misapplied), and the still questionable hypnotism, seem destined to be of inestimable service in the treatment of all sickness, most obviously in disturbances of the nervous system.

Happily,

“The qualities that soothe and heal and bless  
Are scattered at the feet of men like flowers.”

There are men and women everywhere who forget fear and self and give out their beautiful life to the sick. No intelligent physician now neglects the mental, even the psychic states of his patients. Subtle gifts and powers are seen in the highest, or philanthropic, type of the medical man; fortunate is the patient whose doctor adds all noble ways and works to his professional acquirements. Abercrombie, Bigelow, and Clark were, temperamentally, sunshine, faith, patience, and hope.

Such ministrations are, however, but accessory to medical treatment, and should not arrogate the powers and functions of science,

“For who shall change, by prayers or thanksgivings,  
The mystery of the cruelty of things?”

When the son of Mr. Moody, the revivalist, lay sick of scarlet fever, Mr. Moody's daily prayer, thousands helping him in the great tabernacle, was for the doctor's guidance. “May my boy's doctor be directed, and may he save my child!” That doctor's attitude toward revivals was so questionable that the boy's cure by prayer in this partnership was one among numerous modern miracles. But the M.D.'s chosen by D.D.'s are quite apt to be unbelievers. Even missionaries are shockingly delinquent in this matter, and waste no time by employing the mongrel attachés who follow the fathers, if only a scoffer full of knowledge be at hand. How often has the writer seen this wise prudence exercised by the mission leaders of the Sandwich Islands.

Perchance, to aid us all, a class of honest healers or helpers will at last arise whose representatives may not call themselves divine, and may not assume to cure all contagious and organic disease.

I venture, finally, to apply to the mental healers(?) words of an eloquent writer directed against others accused of like delinquency: “They trust to nature, which cannot, like an intelligent surgeon, bring together the gaping lips of a wound, and by their union effect a cure; which, not knowing how to tie a wounded artery, suffers a man in full health and energy to bleed to death; which, in order to remove a splinter from the cornea, destroys the whole eye by suppuration. In an affair so important as that of healing, a profession requiring such intelligence, judgment, and skill, how could they blindly take the vital power for their best instructor and guide, whilst reflective reason and unfettered judgment, those magnificent gifts of the Deity, have been granted to man to enable him infinitely to surpass its performances for the benefit of mankind?”

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#### NOTES AND NEWS.

THE *Illustrated American* says: “It has been decided that it is necessary to send an expedition to Greenland this year to rescue Mr. Peary and his party. The necessity being admitted no one will object to the relief expedition. But it does seem proper to recall some of the conditions under which the original party started. Mr. Peary sought, before his departure, to inspire the belief that the difficulties encountered by previous Arctic explorers would be avoided in a large measure. In this position he was sustained to some extent by the wonderful journey across Greenland performed by Dr. Fridjof Nansen. After passing the barriers of snow and ice on the coast, he hoped to travel over the snow plains of the interior without difficulty on the *skier* that served Dr. Nansen so well. After the expedition started it was discovered that he had taken too rosy a view of the prospect. His arrangements were not so complete as they should have been; so simple a matter as obtaining the co-operation of the Danish Government, and the assistance of the officials in Greenland, had been overlooked. When the party that accompanied him to Greenland returned, grave apprehension for the safety of himself and his companions was felt. And the feeling of apprehension becomes intensified when it is remembered that one of the persons thus subjected to unnecessary risks of suffering, starvation, and perhaps death among Arctic snow wilderness is a woman, Mr. Peary's brave wife.”

— We learn from *Mind* that the second session of the International Congress of Experimental Psychology will be held in London, on Tuesday, Aug. 2, 1892, and the three following days, under the presidency of Professor Henry Sidgwick. Arrangements have already been made by which the main branches of contemporary psychological research will be represented. In addition to the chief lines of investigation comprising the general experimental study of psychical phenomena in the normal human mind, it is intended to bring into prominence such kindred departments of research as the neurological consideration of the cerebral conditions of mental processes; the study of the lower forms of mind in the infant, in the lower races of mankind, and in animals, together with the connected laws of heredity; also the pathology of mind and criminology. Certain aspects of recent hypnotic research will also be discussed, and reports will be given in of the results of the census of hallucinations which it was decided to carry out at the first session of the congress (Paris, 1889). Among those who have already promised to take part in the proceedings of the congress may be named the following: Professor Beaunis, Monsieur A. Binet, Professor Pierre Janet, Professor Th. Ribot, and Professor Richet (France); Professor Lombroso (Italy); Dr. Goldscheider, Dr. Hugo Münsterberg, Professor G. E. Müller, Professor W. Preyer, and Dr. Baron von Schrenk-Notzing (Germany); Professor Alfred Lehmann (Denmark); Professor N. Grote and Professor N. Lange (Russia); Dr. Donaldson, Professor W. James, and Professor Stanley Hall (United States of America); and Professor V. Horsley, Dr. Ch. Mercier, and Dr. G. J. Romanes (England). It is also hoped that Dr. A. Bain, Professor E. Hering, and others, may be able to take part in the proceedings; and that some, as Professor W. Wundt, who will not be able to attend the congress, may send papers. As a specimen of the work that will be done it may be said that Professor Beaunis will deal with Psychological Questioning; Monsieur Binet with some aspect of The Psychology of Insects; Dr. Donaldson with Laura Bridgman; Professor Stanley Hall with Recent Researches in the Psychology of the Skin; Professor Horsley with The Degree of Localization of Movements and Correlative Sensations; Professor Pierre Janet with Loss of Volitional Power; Professor N. Lange with Some Experiments and Theories concerning the Association of Ideas; Professor Lombroso with The Sensibility of Women, Normal, Insane, and Criminal; Dr. Münsterberg with Complex Feelings of Pleasure and Pain; and Professor Richet with The Future of Psychology. A committee of reception has been formed, which includes, among others, the following names: Dr. A. Bain, Dr. D. Ferrier, Mr. F. Galton, Dr. Shadworth Hodgson, Professor V. Horsley, Dr. Hughlings Jackson, Dr. Charles Mercier, Professor Croom Robertson, Dr. G. J. Romanes, Mr. Herbert Spencer, Mr.