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Communications solicited on all Medical and Scientific subjects, and also Reports of Cases occurring in practice. Address, DR. J. L. DAVISON, 12 Charles St., Toronto.

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POLEMIC MEDICINE.

The *odium medicum* is an old thing, and has been from time immemorial at once the bane and the cause of progress of the healing art, as well as the cause of many a gibe from the laity. It exists both as between individuals of the same school, and between the different schools, and must always exist, seeing that opinions must differ in a subject which deals, as that most brilliant literary member of our profession, Dr. O. W. Holmes, says, "not in certainties nor in demonstrations, but chiefly in probabilities." It has been left to the theologians to develop a branch in their curricula, entitled Polemic Theology. Perhaps the medical fraternity, being so occupied in study more important, are kept too ignorant of polemic medicine, and do not know enough of the views and systems taught by other schools than that in which each has been brought up. The "regular" practitioner, in proportion as he is an honest and capable man, can see in the homœopathic practitioner, with whom he refuses to consult, only a knave or a fool. His judgment is not usually based on calm review of the authorities worshipped by his opponent, and in that far cannot be said to be scientifically sound. And it would take so little reading of homœopathic manuals to satisfy a scientifically trained medical man of their utter fallacy, that any practitioner can easily form an independent judgment if he chooses. Dr. G. M. Gould, of Philadelphia, offers a prize of \$100 for the best essay of not more than 15,000 words,

type written, placed in his hands by January 2nd, 1893, on "The Ridiculous Pretensions of Modern Homœopathic Practice." A jury of physicians will read the essays, and the best will be printed for distribution among the laity, the main condition being that the essay "in simplicity and directness should be adapted to the commonest lay understanding." Giving Dr. Gould credit for the best intentions, we venture to say that the scheme is too much like fighting the devil with fire. Homœopathic practice, as judged by the perusal of their *materia medica* in both text-books and drug lists of commercial concerns, stands very much nearer the laity than does scientific practice, is very much more easily "understood (*sic*) of the people," and lends itself far more readily to *ad captandum* argument, and grossly misleading quasi-scientific analogy.

It is all very well to laugh, as does O. W. Holmes, that "if a billionth of a grain of sugar won't begin to sweeten my cup of tea or coffee, I don't feel afraid that a billionth of a grain of anything would poison me,—no, not even if it were snake venom." The answer given in explanation of the claim for increased potency due to increased trituration or dilution, is the false analogy, to any mind with even a blink of pathological and chemical training, utterly indefensible, of the better effect of manure upon soil, the more finely divided it is and the more minutely its portions are brought into contact with the microscopic rootlets, as if a solid when once in a state of solution, could be more finely divided by further dilution. The farmer to whom this analogy was presented would at once think that he saw the point, side with the homœopathic argument, and consider himself as good a man as his doctor, and so he would be if his doctor advanced such an argument. The text-book from which the above amazing explanation (*sic*) is taken is a limbo and chaos of incontinent attack upon men of such eminence as Virchow and Wunderlich, instead of a continuous and logical setting forth of homœopathic tenets. Of inflammation the author says: "Hence in homœopathy, there is neither a specific fever nor a specific inflammation, since all substances, proved on the human body, are capable of producing both fever and inflammation, though each one is different from the other according to the kind of irritation present. . . . To pre-