

**LETTER FROM DR. WATERHOUSE  
IN FAVOR OF THE THOMSONIAN  
PRACTICE OF MEDICINE.\***

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BOSTON COURIER :

I have lately read, with considerable interest and some surprise, a little volume of nearly 200 pages, entitled, "A narrative of the life and Medical Discoveries of Samuel Thomson, containing an account of his system of Practice, and manner of Curing Diseases with Vegetable Medicines upon a plan entirely new," to which is added, his *New Guide to Health*, containing the principles upon which the system is founded.

While reading the book, I said to those who recommended it to my perusal, this man is no "QUACK." He narrates his medical discoveries, gives an account of his system of practice, together with his manner of curing diseases, upon a plan confessedly new; to which he adds the principles upon which his new system is founded. He who does this is no *charlatan*, but by uniting theory to practice, merits attention.—With these ideas of cultivation and promulgation of human knowledge, I read the narrative of Samuel Thomson and soon perceived that he was a man of good capacity, persevering temper, and benevolent disposition; and then he acquired his knowledge of the hitherto unknown virtues of certain plants by experiments, first on himself, and then on those about him. In the course of twenty or thirty years, he arranged his experimental knowledge into a system, as did the father of physic before him, however imperfect; and, having done this to the best of his power, (for he had no literary education,) he published the result of his experience, labor and thoughts to the world, for it to judge of them and of him.

*Auto Biography* is a profitable species of writing to the world, but dangerous to the writer himself, especially if a professional man or a political partisan; before he can gain

\*Our readers will doubtless recollect that Dr. Waterhouse is one of the most eminent literary men in our country. He has been a lecturer on the THEORY AND PRACTICE OF MEDICINE in Harvard University, (Cambridge, Mass.) for twenty-seven years, and his fame as a Medical Philosopher has spread through France England, Germany, and most other European countries.

credit for one honourable motive, every sinister object that can be imagined will be laid to his account. Who, among his competitors, will exercise that impartiality on hearing his story, which they require of him in relating it? Narrow-minded jealousy will pervert every thing. We may allow for a little high coloring in controversy with rivals—very few physicians or divines are free from it; but if Samuel Thomson, in the narrative of his life, has not turned aside from facts, he has been unjustly treated, and, in some instances, most cruelly persecuted. He has given names, dates, places and events, and spoken of judges, sheriffs, jailors, and witnesses, in a style so plain as to exclude equivocation; and the same of a noted preacher. If what he said of them be false, he ought to be exposed and publicly punished; if true, he merits protection. His discoveries are valuable or insignificant; his practice, a nuisance or a benefit; his writings, useful, or a tissue of lies and calumnies; his *Patent*, honorable, or a disgrace to our government; and it is not beneath the dignity of any physician, divine, or philosopher, to inquire into the truth of a series of experiments published with so much confidence, and purporting to be for the benefit of mankind.

I have no doubt that Samuel Thomson has added a very valuable article to the *Materia Medica*, and that he has again and again relieved the sick where others have failed. From all that I can recollect, I am induced to believe that he is not an avaricious man, but one who is more flattered by success in relieving the sick than in receiving their money. This at least, entitles him to a patient hearing. It is possible he may have deceived himself; but it does not appear that he has laid himself out like a conjurer, to deceive others. If this man has devoted the greater part of his life to the relief of his fellow men, his labors claim respect, and his errors our indulgence; for who of us are free from them? Let the unprejudiced man, who reads his *Narrative and Guide to Health*, judge for himself; but should he boggle at his theory of heat and cold, let him remember that Thomson, without