

QUACKERY.

I had intended touching at length on the various quackeries which are now so rampant among the most civilized nations and amongst their most cultivated classes, but time warns me I must be brief. I refer to such things as Christian Science, Mental Science, Spiritualism, Vitapathy, Osteopathy and such like—but perhaps they have their uses in this rapid and restless age—they probably are a vent for people who would otherwise have to be confined in asylums at a great expense to the public. Could any individual write such a lot of stuff as the following without there being a suspicion of insanity in the case? “If I believe in the power of disease, my thought atmosphere could not heal a patient. Disease has no power of its own but only as much power as our ignorance concedes to it. Disease is ignorance, intelligence is cure. Disease is but a negation of the ubiquitous life principle. This life principle has taken entire possession of me and my thoughts, I live in it. I am it.” Such stuff as this, *ad infinitum*, is read and believed in by thousands—believed in but not understood. Education will not abolish belief in quacks and quackery. I wrote an article on quackery many years ago, which was published in the Popular Science Monthly, and I closed with the following quotation, which seems appropriate on the present occasion:—“The final though distant extinction of quackery is to be hoped for. It forms a fragment of that final triumph of reason and virtue which is the secret consolation of every philanthropist.”

It is partly due to the profession itself that quackery flourishes. So many men who are unfit for the profession enter it and look on it as a business to make money, honestly perhaps, if possible, but to make it even if the credulity of the public is drawn on. Many of the doctors who write to papers like the “Alkaline Clinic,” the “Medical Short-cut” and others of such a character, have a most misty idea of their profession and apparently are ignorant enough to deceive themselves as well as the public. I fancy they practice all the pathys, —one man from Texas asks the editor if he has anything that is a “dead shot” for eczema, another asks what is the most ‘up-to-date scientific caper’ for goitre, and so on; one specimen of sputum from an old lady, which was sent to the editor for examination, contained tubercle bacilli, diplococci, pneumo-bacilli, saprophytes and pus cells. Another patient, from the writer’s description of her case, is diagnosed as having an extra vulnerability and an extra colony of microbes in her mouth. Such is the literature many feed upon, always looking for tips and sure cures, never accurately diagnosing the disease and always changing treatment. Is it any wonder that quacks flourish?