

## HOMOEOPATHY BEFORE THE *CONSEIL D'ETAT*

The 'powerful' of medicine would soon overcome their armed indifference about official approval.

Dr GRANIER, the author of *Homéolexique*, had just died in Nice, bequeathing 30,000 francs to *Saint-Jacques* Hospital. The family of the deceased opposed that article of the will, using the fact that the legacy had been left not to the *Société civile des hôpitaux et maisons de santé homéopathiques* but to the hospital, which did not have legal status. CRETIN, JOUSSET and MOLIN consulted several of their patients, senior members of the *Conseil d'Etat* who appeared on the list of the subscribers to the hospital. The latter could unanimously see no other solution than official approval and strongly recommended it.

In 1876, that favour was asked for the 'French homoeopathic medical Society', whose hospital became legally what it was in reality, its foundation and property. Everything went well at first. The Seine prefecture and the police headquarters only raised objections of an internal nature that were easily dismissed, the town council voted for it almost unanimously despite the strong opposition of a doctor councillor, Dr DELPECH. The Minister of the Interior handed the file in to the *Conseil d'Etat*, which had in the last resort to give its approval to applications of that nature. They seemed to have won the day, as friendly councillors said, when, three days before the happy deliberation, there was a *coup de théâtre*, the Minister of the Interior asked for the postponement of the case! What had happened?

*Maître* GUERRIER, the legal adviser to the *Association générale de prévoyance et de secours mutuels des médecins de France*, told the president of the group 'that a homoeopathic society was waiting to obtain from the *Conseil d'Etat* the decree ordering the recognition of its benefit to the public at large and as that application had met no opposition from the various authorities to which it had been submitted, it was to receive three days later a favourable report from the *Conseil d'Etat*<sup>1</sup>.

It was action stations! The committee members of the *Association générale des médecins de France* met immediately. To deal with the most urgent matters first, the doctor deputies were asked to intervene forcefully with the Minister of the Interior, 'as only he could stop that affair by withdrawing the case from the *Conseil d'Etat*'. The latter very obediently did as they were asked to but the minister only agreed to a postponement for supplementary information. How different this is from the doctor's essential role, which is to cure the sick!

The committee members of the Association - A. LATOUR was its general secretary, it is all clear now - asked an old acquaintance of the 1858 lawsuit, Dr GALLARD, and Messrs FAUVEL and GUERRIER to write the 'supplementary information'. Alerted by the president of the Association, the Academy of Medicine, too, asked Messrs Henri ROGER and BECLARD to

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<sup>1</sup> *Annuaire de l'Association générale des médecins de France*, 18<sup>th</sup> year.

write a protest. Dr DECAISNE, in the newspaper *La France*, briefly summarised in his way, for the general public, that jiggery-pokery. After obviously thinking about GALLARD's old and too famous saga, he wrote, 'We hope the Minister of the Interior will spare the medical profession that insult by rejecting the audacious application of the more or less reckless - I shall be indulgent - followers of that so-called doctrine, the unhealthy dream of a sick if not dishonest mind'<sup>2</sup>.

GALLARD, LATOUR and company composed in less than three days the famous document the minister asked for and presented it through the all-powerful Baron LARREY. 'May the Minister', the report read, 'consider that, by granting the so ardently hoped for approval, the government would seem to take under its wing a sort of medical doctrine entirely different from conventional medicine, from the medicine it has taught in its faculties and schools, which it subsidises in academies and learned societies, from the legal and official medicine that is the only one accepted in its advice because only it is capable of rendering administrative and social services'<sup>3</sup>. It must be admitted that the line of argument, in which nothing - not even intimidation - was missing, gave the Minister more than his due because of its clumsiness, its inaccuracies and its outrageous bias. Dr GONNARD, the secretary of the homoeopathic society, did not hesitate to criticise it.

The time of Louis-Philippe was over and Napoleon III himself, who was so good at scrutinising public opinion before acting, had already chosen to dispense with the opinions of the Faculty towards the end of his reign. Consequently, the interference of the committee members of the *Association générale des médecins de France*, which had set everything in motion, produced exactly the opposite of the expected effect. The *Conseil d'Etat*, informed about the hidden side of the affair, felt hurt and considered that last-minute report that had been imposed on it by a politico-medical manoeuvre to be inadmissible. The senior civil servant responsible for following the application felt so correctly that the wind was turning in favour of homoeopaths that he said to one of them, 'If you provoke such fear and enmity, then you must already be very strong'<sup>4</sup>. However, as the Minister of the Interior was determined to avoid interpellation before the Chamber of Deputies, which would have used it for its political manoeuvres against the cabinet, what concerned the homoeopathic society was removed from the petition and only the hospital was left : the scientific question had become less important than the charity question.

The delay caused by those difficulties to the course of the application did not exceed three months. The *Conseil d'Etat* approved the favourable report and, at the suggestion of M. de MARCERE, the Minister of the Interior, Marshal de MacMahon, President of the Republic, signed the decree giving official approval to *Saint-Jacques* Hospital on 13 July 1878.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *La France*, 28 March 1878.

<sup>3</sup> *Annuaire de l'Association générale des médecins de France*, 18<sup>th</sup> year.

<sup>4</sup> That association did not fuss as much when Dr Roth, who had been a homoeopath for fifty years, bequeathed 100,000 francs to it. The president Henri Roger, at the 28<sup>th</sup> general meeting, discreetly turned a blind eye to his medical convictions and praised his personality. What merit! (*Le Temps*, 19 April 1887).

<sup>5</sup> Translated by Pascale Tempka