

## HOMOEOPATHY BEFORE THE *SENAT*

The first great discussion about the homoeopathic doctrine had begun at the Academy of Medicine in 1835, and it had resolved it both by complete lack of honesty and lack of scientific perspective. The second one occurred before the courts in 1858 and everyone got it off their chest without any resulting immediate benefits. The third one entered the *Sénat* in 1865. It is not in a time when our parliamentary institution is so discredited in France that we shall take the trouble to explain that it was as easy to betray the senators' good faith as hard for homoeopaths to obtain anything if the mandarins of medicine were opposed to it.

Two thousand workers from Paris had signed a petition calling for homoeopathy to be applied in hospitals on the same level as any other therapy. They considered that measure to be necessary to ensure the freedom to choose the nature of their treatment, which their indigence made them beg from public charity. The signatures were gradually collected in a few homoeopathic health centres of the capital but we did not find the name of the author, who obviously knew about the medical disputes of the time.

M. A. THAYER read a very favourable report at the *Sénat* on 28 June 1865<sup>1</sup> and recognised the right of the poor - just like the rich - to choose the treatment they thought would be the most successful. During a later session, President BONJEAN, too, delivered a remarkable speech but the public prosecutor DUPIN and Senator DUMAS won a dilatory vote<sup>2</sup>. DUPIN, opposed to any novelty (was homoeopathy a new thing?), was much less influential than DUMAS's speech, which deeply impressed those present. The senator, who was a former professor of chemistry at the Faculty of Medicine at Paris, produced the ultimate hypocrisy and falsehood, whose sources had been given to him - at least partly - by the new management of the *Assistance publique* that had succeeded M. DAVAINÉ. If *Maître* OLIVIER, the lawyer of the 1858 lawsuit, had sat in the *Sénat*, poor DUMAS would have been worried stiff and the good faith of the *Assemblée* would not have been betrayed !

The speech prompted the immediate reaction of homoeopaths, who sent indignant protests, with evidence to prove them, to the different newspapers. Let us remember the responses of P. JOUSSET, FREDAUT, MILCENT, Ch. OZANAM, GALLAVARDIN and ROUX. The French *Société Médicale homéopathique* wrote a report on the subject, which, unfortunately, was not given as much publicity as the pack of mistakes of our honourable friend DUMAS. The affair remained a great blow to the new art.

Let us look at a few points from the speech delivered by the former professor of chemistry : 'Homoeopathy has spread across the world, it was momentarily and ephemerally successful in the public opinion of certain countries, where it was abandoned afterwards'.<sup>3</sup> The proof of that claim is extraordinary.

According to him, at the London homoeopathic hospital, a number of beds would remain vacant and the others would be occupied by the surgery unit. According to the

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<sup>1</sup> *Moniteur*, 19 June 1865. See also the reports in the popular press.

<sup>2</sup> *Moniteur*, 2 July 1865.

<sup>3</sup> *Moniteur officiel*, 2 July 1865.

General Meeting of the administrators of the aforementioned hospital<sup>4</sup> which was held on 18 April 1856, it has been established that, in the 50 beds, 482 patients had been looked after during the year, of whom only 20 had surgical affections. There is talk of creating 10 more beds and of building a new pavilion for contagious patients.

As regards the Austrian empire, DUMAS accepted the truncated literature of a doctor from that country. It seems that there would only be an unofficial department in a Vienna hospital. But, in 1865, there were other hospitals than the Leopoldstadt one in that country. There existed the Gumpendorf (80 beds) and Sechshaus (160 beds) ones near the capital ; in the provinces, there were the Linz and Steyr ones ; in Hungary, the Güns and Gyöngyös ones ; in Moravia, the Kremsier one ; in Bohemia, the Nechantiz one and, in the Province of Silesia, the Luban one.

'In Brazil', DUMAS went on, 'homoeopathy was ephemerally successful', it 'fell into complete discredit' and 'it completely disappeared from Rio de Janeiro'. And yet, at the same time, there were in Rio 47 homoeopaths, 6 special pharmacies, a hospital (40 beds), 34 health centres and a journal<sup>5</sup>.

Of course DUMAS preferred not to mention the prodigious development of homoeopathy in the United States, he forgot its universities, its hospitals, etc. ; perhaps it was wiser but, in any case, it was not honest.

As for France, we shall only take one flower from the bunch, it will give the scent of the whole, 'In Lyons', he said, 'homoeopathy has lost much ground for the last few weeks. There is only, I think, one orthodox homoeopath left'. One should read GALLAVARDIN's fiery response, signed by all the other homoeopaths from Lyons, it is worth it<sup>6</sup>. What a coincidence, the truth was precisely the opposite of what the senator had said.

In a second point, DUMAS proclaimed the tolerant feelings of the *Assistance publique* concerning the entry examination, 'There is no bias, no matter what people say... If a doctor wants to work for the *Assistance* in Paris, they only have to sit the examination'. He affirmed that candidates who had got very good marks had not been appointed because they had not persevered two or three times. The best proof of tolerance was the admission of TESSIER in 1840. What impudence ! Reality was quite different. House doctors in TESSIER's service such as JOUSSET, FREDault, MILCENT, OZANAM, GABALDA, DAVASSE, CHAMPEAUX sat the examination seven or eight times from 1847 to 1854 ; they gave up at that date, 'tired of being told by their judges that they would exhaust themselves with pointless efforts and they would be appointed on condition that they publicly renounced homoeopathy'<sup>7</sup>. In a letter dated 27 January 1854, which they had left in the hands of the Director General of the *Assistance publique*, they had protested and given details on the abominable pressure they

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<sup>4</sup> Here are the names of a few patrons : the Duchess of Cambridge, the Duke of Beaufort, the Archbishop of Dublin, the Earl of Essex, the Earl of Albemarle, Lord Gray, Lord Page, Lord Ebury, etc.

<sup>5</sup> *Lettre du Dr Maximiano, Marquis de Carvalho*, 4 August 1863, *Bulletin de la Société de Médecine homéopathique de France*, 1865, p. 493.

<sup>6</sup> *Bulletin de la Société de Médecine homéopathique de France*, 1865, p. 293.

<sup>7</sup> *Art médical*, 1865, t. XXII, p. 137. A few examples of the suggestions they had to dismiss will be found in the margin of the *Mémoire* on that affair in the *Bulletin de la Société homéopathique de France*.

had been subjected to from Dr SANDRAS, HARDY, VALLEIX, etc. The open letter was even inserted into the *Moniteur des Hôpitaux*, but to no avail. As regards TESSIER, in 1840, it was not about homoeopathy, as he only started to try it out in 1847. We have already mentioned in passing the fierce opposition which developed against him from 1850. TESSIER died in 1862, shortly after the new hospital management informed him that he could no longer count on the 'indulgence' and 'weakness' of the impartial M. DAVAINÉ. Was not TESSIER's appointment at the *Hôtel-Dieu*, for which he was eligible, as was customary, by seniority, also pinched from him on two occasions ? The management of the *Assistance publique* then declared that the *Hôtel-Dieu* was not open to homoeopathy<sup>8</sup>.

As for tolerance in general, we have already mentioned it on several occasions. In 1836, Dr LABURTHE, an army surgeon of the 4<sup>th</sup> Hussar Regiment, treated his patients with homoeopathy ; he made the mistake of publishing the happy results obtained for three years : a month later, he was dismissed. In 1845, RISUENO D'AMADOR, a professor at Montpellier University, was forbidden, despite the protests of the illustrious LORDAT, from dealing with HAHNEMANN's great reform in his courses. In 1846, GIRAUD, HUREAU senior and DEFERT were expelled from the *Société Médicale* of the 6<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*. In 1849, MARCHANT, despite his desperate efforts, had to leave Bordeaux Hospital, like his predecessor MABIT. In 1855, MILCENT was asked not to set foot again in the Val-de-Grâce because his therapeutic convictions did not coincide with those of the Faculty. At the same time as the *Société anatomique* carried out a series of exclusions for 'scientific immorality' or crime of 'homoeopathic publications', Dr Charles OZANAM was compelled to resign from his job as a librarian at the Academy of Medicine. IMBERT-GOURBEYRE ruined his promotion the very same day that he announced his faith in the new therapy. We should say many more things on the subject but it is best to stop.

To conclude his speech, Senator DUMAS produced materia medica from HAHNEMANN, an explanation of infinitesimal doses specially composed for the senators, and he did not forget to insinuate that homoeopaths, according to their 'interest', practised either one or the other type of medicine.

How, with such a tissue of lies said by an esteemed man, would they not have simply turned to the business of the day ?<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Gazette hebdomadaire*, 4 October 1861 ; *Art médical*, November 1861, June and July 1862.

<sup>9</sup> Translated by Pascale Tempka