

An inaugural dissertation on the unity of disease, as opposed to nosology : submitted to the examination of the Rev. John Ewing, S.T.P. provost ; the trustees and medical faculty, of the University of Pennsylvania, on the thirty-first of May 1800, for the degree of Doctor of Medicine / by Alexander May, of Pennsylvania.

Contributors

May, Alexander.
Rush, Benjamin, 1746-1813
May, Arthur, -1812
Groff, Joseph, -1802
Way, Andrew
Coxe, John Redman, 1773-1864
University of Pennsylvania.
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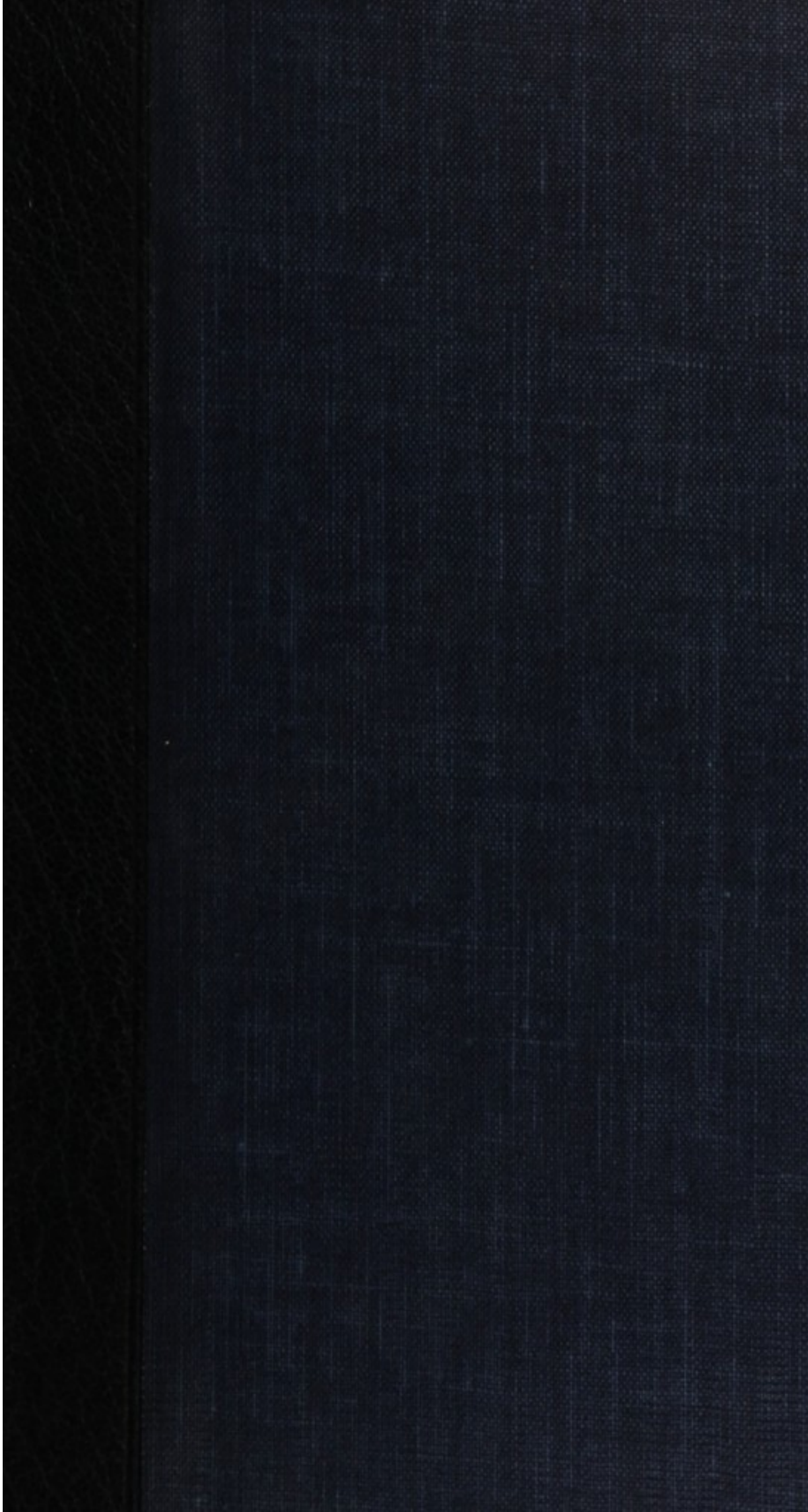
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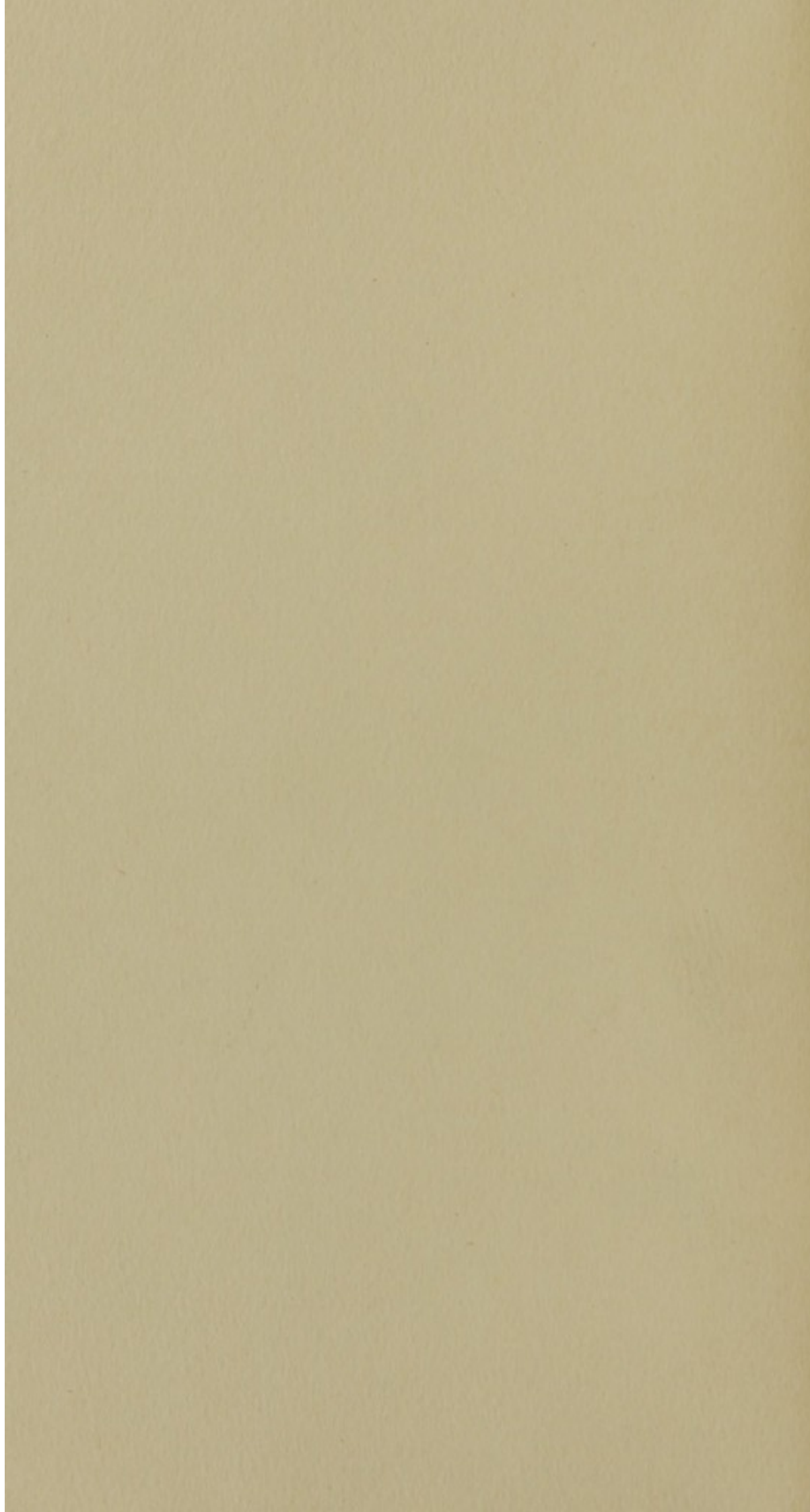
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AN
INAUGURAL DISSERTATION
ON THE *Swath*
UNITY OF DISEASE,
AS OPPOSED TO
N O S O L O G Y:

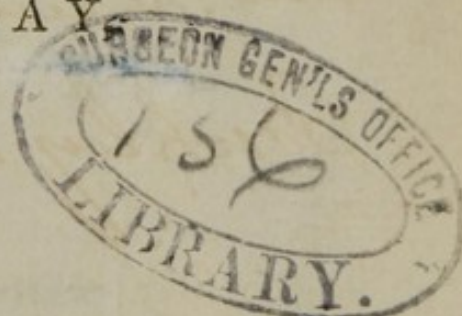
SUBMITTED TO THE
EXAMINATION
OF THE
REV. JOHN EWING, S. T. P. PROVOST;
THE
TRUSTEES & MEDICAL FACULTY,

OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,
On the thirty-first of May 1800,
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MEDICINE:

—✚—
BY ALEXANDER MAY
OF PENNSYLVANIA.

—✚—
E PLURIBUS UNUM.
—✚—

PHILADELPHIA:
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John Redman Foxe 1810.

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TO
BENJAMIN RUSH, M. D.

PROFESSOR OF THE INSTITUTES AND PRACTICE OF
MEDICINE,

IN THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA;

AS A MARK OF THE
RESPECT AND GRATITUDE

OF HIS

SINCERE FRIEND AND OBLIGED PUPIL:

ALSO, TO

ARTHUR MAY, M. D.

OF CHESTER, IN PENNSYLVANIA;

AS A MARK OF
FRATERNAL AFFECTION;

THE FOLLOWING

DISSERTATION

IS INSCRIBED,

BY HIS FRIEND AND BROTHER,

ALEXANDER MAY.

May 31st, 1800.

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The unity and simplicity of nature, in all its
of its parts, is a unity and simplicity of nature.
The nature we approach to truth in, is a unity
the phenomena of the universe, the greater identity
and uniformity, and the greater identity
plex our nature, the more the mind becomes in-
veloped in error. The unity of nature is con-
spicuous in all its agencies, where one agent is
intention to affect the whole, the more the unity
The action of the heavenly bodies, the change
of seasons, the day and night, the
tides, winds, and the different phenomena of na-
ture, were made to manifest the unity of nature.
power was distributed, and the governing prin-
ciple of the universe.
The unity of nature, and the unity of nature,
this law of unity and simplicity, and the unity
the work of nature. A few elementary principles
are fundamental to the basis of all the various forms
of matter which compose the universe.

A
DISSERTATION
ON THE
UNITY OF DISEASE, &c.

THE unity and simplicity of nature, in all her operations, is obvious to every judicious observer.

The nearer we approach to truth in exploring the phenomena of the universe, the greater identity and uniformity we discover; and the more complex our notions, the more the mind becomes involved in error. The frugality of nature is conspicuous in all her operations; where one agent is sufficient to affect her purpose, she never uses more.

The motions of the heavenly bodies, the change of seasons, the succession of day and night, the tides, winds, and the different phenomena of motion, were most absurdly explained, till one single power was discovered to be the sole governing principle of them all.

The science of chemistry affords many proofs of this law of unity and simplicity existing throughout the works of nature. A few elementary substances are found to be the basis of all the various forms of matter which compose the universe.

All life, animal and vegetable, however variously modified, is the effect of one agent, viz. *stimulus*. Health and disease, are effects of the same agent, differing in degree. The simplicity of nature's operations often prevents their being seen. Men in their investigations extend their views beyond the simplicity of truth, and consequently become lost in error. The circulation of the blood was long a mystery; but its simplicity appears to have been the only cause of its obscurity: and the physiology of the nervous system, the *arcanum* of the present day, probably lies concealed under the same simplicity.

Some have become infidels in religion, from no other cause, than that truth was too simple to be believed. The same cause makes men infidels in the science of medicine, by leading them beyond the simplicity of nature for the cause of disease.

I. Disease is simply, *morbid excitement*, or *wrong action*; or, in other words, it consists in a morbid state of the system, in which *some* of its functions are carried on in an uneasy and irregular manner.

This morbid excitement, whether it exist in the form of *convulsive action*, *suffocated action*, *spasm*, *itching* or *heat*, is the same thing, and all these are effects of different degrees of force in the remote, or exciting causes, or of the difference of organization in the affected parts; they all, moreover, occur at different times, under different circumstances of treatment, in the same form of disease; as in *gout* and *yellow fever*.

From an ignorance of the *unity* of disease, physicians have fabricated a nosology, dividing disease into as many different diseases as the various forms in which it appears ; and arranging them into different *classes, orders, genera* and *species*, according to their various causes, seats or symptoms.

Nosology, or a history of diseases, has long engaged the labours of physicians. The ancient Greek and Roman physicians began the attempt. Since them, Platerus, Sagar, Sauvages, Sydenham, Baglivi, Linnæus, Vogel, Cullen, and others, have laboured to bring it to perfection ; but all to very little purpose.

“ All of the attempts,” say the learned and ingenious editors of the medical repository, “ to arrange morbid affections, have been exceedingly imperfect, and it is likely they will always remain so. We suspect there is a radical difficulty in all these nosological attempts, which it is impossible to remedy ; and that is, that nature has not distinguished symptom from symptom, in diseases, with the same exactness, by which plant differs from plant ; or one animal, or mineral, varies from another ; but, on the contrary, has interwoven the tissue of diseases by threads which are inextricable, but by a more correct and scientific acquaintance with their causes.”

It is impossible to divide diseases, or give them names which can delineate with any accuracy their

different natures, from the different forms of morbid action.

Cullen's *pyrexia*, would lead us to believe, from the definition of the word, that this *class* of diseases* is always attended with a preternatural degree of heat, which is not the case, as all the different orders of this class frequently appear with a temperature of the body, that is natural, or preternaturally cool.

Yellow fever is a name given to specify a particular form of disease; but the symptom from which it derives its name does not occur oftener, perhaps, than once in twenty cases: here we are liable to be deceived nineteen times in twenty by the name.

Fevers have been called *intermittent*, *remittent*, &c. by way of distinction; but these names are not characteristic of any particular form of fever; as the symptoms by which these are designated, occur more or less in all forms. Thus the impropriety and uncertainty of naming disease, from any form whatever, might be shewn, did it not seem like an attempt to illustrate what must already appear self-evident.

We might as well expect to comprehend the nature of a storm, by attending to its various forms, and distinguishing them by hard names, as to divide fevers by their remissions or intermissions.

II. Diseases have been divided from their remote causes; but this is improper, as they all act more or less in one way, viz. by *stimulus*.

* The plural number is used in conformity to custom.

Dr. Brown says, "all stimulant hurtful powers, are participant, but of one effect." Poisons, intemperance, opium, external violence, miasmata, contagions, vicissitude of heat and cold, and passions of the mind, all produce diseases so similar, that the most discriminating nosologist could not distinguish them. The poison of the viper produced a disease so much like a pleurisy, that Dr. Tennant was induced to administer the same remedies in the cure of both.

Intoxication, in the fall of 1799, produced a fever with violent convulsions, delirium, and inability to stand or speak. The cure was the same as if marsh miasmata had been the remote cause. The loss of a pint of blood, restored the patient to the use of his feet, speech and reason.

A case of fever from opium, occurred in 1798; the remote cause not being known, it was suspected to be yellow fever: the face was flushed, the eyes inflamed, the pulse high; by copious bleeding, purging and blistering, the patient recovered, and acknowledged the remote cause to be a draught of laudanum.

Heat and cold, in the extreme, produce similar effects; inflammation, vesication, and pain, are the common effects of both.*

B

* The similar sensation produced by the *frigorific mixture*, to that of heat, was experienced by a number of the chemical class, as well as myself, last winter, when the brilliant experiment of freezing mercury, was performed by the indefatigable and accurate chemist, Dr. Woodhouse. The cold produced, caused the mercury in the thermometer to fall 60

Bilious fever and pleurisy, have different remote causes; but they have symptoms exactly similar, and are both cured by depletion, which proves that they are the same disease, for even Dr. Cullen admit that “disorders, which are cured altogether by the same remedies, are of the same nature.”

The fever succeeding a broken bone, surgical operations, as lithotomy, amputation and trepanning, has the same symptoms as pleurisy and bilious fever, and is cured by the same remedies.

The remote cause of small-pox, though different from any other, produces the same symptoms that occur from other remote causes. “The small-pox and measles, are cured by the same means as peripneumony, or any other sthenic disease,” says Brown. And “disorders which are cured altogether by the same remedies, are of the same nature,” says Cullen.

In the present month, a middle aged man, of a robust habit, was taken ill, with every symptom of a highly malignant fever, at Chester in this state; he had drunken spirits freely through the day; was bled a quart in the evening,—purged; bled next morning, purged again. The remote cause was unknown, till the small-pox made their appearance. Three days afterwards, he walked out, and complained only of pain from the eruption. In the same way, physicians often prevent death, from the small-pox,

degrees below 0; and the mixture felt like coals of fire. This experiment was never performed before in America.

by mistake, without a knowledge of the remote cause, or the name of the disease.

That the cure of small-pox, is the same as of other diseases, is proved by the success of the present mode of inoculation. By the abstraction of stimulus, we as certainly lessen the malignity of small-pox, as if marsh miasmata had been the remote cause; and by the addition of any stimulus, we as certainly aggravate its symptoms. Even the eruption, which is its specific characteristic, may be prevented by copious depletion. The pustules are the mere effects of the disease. Erysipelas, miliaria, shingles, nettle-rash, phlegmon, abscesses, cancers, buboes, scrofulous and scorbutic ulcers, are all local affections, induced by fever. They are not diseases, but *disorders*, the effects of disease, and merely accidental circumstances.

“Eruptions, are fevers translated to the skin; the prickly-heat, the rash, and the effere of authors, are all states of misplaced fever.”† Sydenham calls dysentery, *febris introversa*; we may with the same propriety, call eruptive fever, *febris extraversa*. This variety in the effects of disease, is nothing more than pervades all nature; but cannot affect the unity of disease, which depends on unity of cause, and unity of cure.

As many different remote causes, produce similar effects at one time, so at another time, one produces the different effects of all.

† Dr. Rush's Inquiries and Observations. Vol. IV.

The same stimulant power supports life and health; and, in a different degree, causes disease. The same remote cause produces effects directly dissimilar: What is more so, than the *cold* and *hot* fits of ague?

The various symptoms of bilious fever, caused by marsh miasmata, afford a proof of the same thing; these are apoplexy, coma, convulsions, rigour, sore throat, hoarseness, giddiness, faintness, delirium, pain in the head, eye-balls, back, hips, limbs, neck and ears, nausea, vomiting, burning in the hands and feet, hemorrhage from the nose, mouth and bowels.* These are all symptoms of but one disease, and Cullen says, "that some similarity of the cause, argues a similarity of disorder produced by it."

A physician of a neighbouring village informed me, that the cold of last January, produced, in the course of his practice, pleurisy, rheumatism, gout, apoplexy, palsy, nephritis, hæmoptysis, quinsy, pneumonia, ophthalmia, hemiplegia, catarrh, stricture in the urethra, and cynanche trachealis, and that depletion cured them all. These could not be different diseases, for they arose from one cause, and were cured by one remedy. A nosologist would have attempted to find names for all these different symptoms; which would have been as useless in leading to a proper mode of treatment, as a knowledge of the names of the different persons affected.

* See Dr. Rush's account of bilious fever. Vol. I.

The venereal virus seldom affects different persons in the same way. One is affected with gonorrhœa, another with chancres, some with buboes, others with phymosis, and chordee, whilst many receive no injury, who have all been equally exposed to the same infection. All these different effects also occur in the same person, at different times, from the same cause.

Inflammation appears in different forms, as phlegmon, gangrene and schirrus. The two latter are only effects of the former; and the difference in form is caused by different modes of treatment, the susceptibility of the parts, and the different degrees of the cause producing them.

Pleasure and pain are both the effects of one cause, differing in degree. Thus, *friction* when gentle gives pleasure; when violent, pain. So *heat*, in cold weather, produces both, according to the quantity applied; and *cold* in hot weather has the same effect.

So uniform is the power that produces disease in its operations, that could we ascertain the force of the acting power, and the strength or susceptibility of the system acted on, we might almost with certainty predict the final issue of disease.

When we see effects so similar, from causes so different, and when we see these effects removed by the same mode of treatment, we conclude with Dr. Cullen, "that disorders which are cured altogether by the same remedies are of the same nature."

When we see effects so different, produced by the same cause, we also conclude with Cullen, "That some similitude of the cause argues a similitude of the disorder produced by it." And our final conclusion must be, that all the remote causes, however various, unite in their operations, and produce but one disease, viz. *morbid action*.

III. Diseases cannot be divided from the predisposing cause; it is a *unit*, viz. *debility*; or a derangement of the equilibrium of excitement and excitability, which is the standard of health. This derangement is induced by the power of the remote cause. When it operates feebly on the system it only induces debility, and the power of the exciting cause is necessary to produce disease; hence debility is not disease, but its predisposing cause.

IV. Diseases have been divided from the *exciting cause*; but these have only one mode of action, and are reinforcements to the remote causes, acting by the same stimulant power on the accumulated excitability, and producing the *proximate cause* of disease.

V. Diseases have been divided from their proximate cause; but this is improper, for the proximate cause is a unit, viz. morbid excitement or the disease itself; and as disease which is caused and cured in the same manner, is a unit; so must the proximate cause be a unit; but out of this one disease, Cullen has fabricated 1387 different diseases, for many of which he gives a different proximate cause; his success in this attempt may

readily be imagined, from his unfortunate choice of SPASM for the *proximate cause* of fever.

Says Cullen again, "But as medicines are only applied to diseases for the purpose of removing the proximate cause, it must necessarily be, that disorders which are cured altogether by the same remedies are of the same nature." Here the proximate cause and *nature* of the disease depend on the success of the medicine. If bark and wine do not cure the remittent and intermittent fevers they are necessarily diseases of different *natures*, with different proximate causes; but when depletion cures them both, they become one, and when bleeding cures yellow fever, bilious fever, gout, and small-pox, of necessity they become diseases of one *nature*, with but one proximate cause.

Since the mode of cure has been found to be a unit, the number of drugs is reduced in our shops, prescriptions are less complex, and the whole science is rendered more simple and intelligible. A student now may acquire more useful knowledge in a few years, where simplicity and unity are taught, than in an age in the schools of the nosologists. Here we have theory founded on the firm basis of reason and experience, and facts to prove the truth of our theory.

VI. Nosologists have even given different names to diseases from their different seats. Pain in the head is called cephalalgia, in the ears otalgia, in the teeth odontalgia, in the limbs rheumatism, in the feet

gout, and in the side pleurisy. We might with the same propriety give different specific names to clouds, from the different parts of the hemisphere they occupy.

Spasm in the glottis is named croup, in the bowels colic, in the lower jaw tetanus, in the limbs cramp, in the extreme vessels, Cullen's proximate cause of fever.

Eruption on the face is erysipelas, on every part but the face miliaria, on part of the body shingles, on all the body rash, prickly heat, and hives. These are all symptoms or effects of disease, determined to a weak part. To divide these different forms into different genera and species, or to call them by different names every time they change their seat, is as absurd, as to say a man changes his species whenever he changes his situation, or to call him by a different name every time we meet him in a different place.

Inflammation in the brain is named phrenitis, in the liver hepatitis, in the kidneys nephritis, in the stomach gastritis, in the intestines enteritis, in the lungs pneumony, in the eyes ophthalmia, in the schneiderian membrane coryza, in the trachea cyananche trachealis, and in the tonsils cyananche tonsillaris. All these would be treated differently by a nosologist, according to their names and situation; as if fire which breaks out in the kitchen were specifically different from that in the parlour, and required different applications to ex-

tinguish it ; but fire is still the same thing, and the simple article water, extinguishes it with equal success in every part.

The form of nervous fever, which is called typhus gravior, is represented as being a specific disease ; but it is found to be peculiar in nothing but in degree : which instead of being of the lowest, as has been supposed, is of the highest inflammatory type. It occurs in confluent small pox, which is the highest grade of this form of fever. We often find the pulse raised by blood-letting in this fever, from a low *typhus* to a violent *synocha*. When the system is stimulated to the extent of its power, it succumbs under the load of greater stimulus and is prostrated ; the pulse is depressed ; but depletion relieves it, and permits it to act again with violence. A patient in this form of fever could not sit up for weakness ; his physician desired his pupil to bleed him, he lost 30 ounces of blood, and large bleedings frequently repeated restored him to perfect health.

Dr. Brown mentions a desperate case of typhus gravior cured by bleeding, which he says puzzled him ; and similar cases often occur, which are cured by bleeding, to the utter astonishment of all Brunonians and nosologists who have never experienced the happy effects of it in this form of fever.

Those who distinguish diseases from their effects or symptoms, are under the necessity of changing their names as often as the symptoms vary ; but, says Cullen, “ Characters in nosology ought not

to be usurped by any means, till after a long continuance of the disorder ; perhaps not till it is finished." To *name* a disease after it is finished !—Are these the words of the illustrious Dr. Cullen ?—How great the absurdity of nosological arrangement, to produce such a declaration from so great a man !—*Delenda est nosologia !*

To specify the genera and species of disease from the effects or symptoms, is impossible ; because many which are said to be of different genera and species, have symptoms exactly similar. Hysterical and hypochondriacal symptoms frequently occur in gout and malignant states of fever. Small-pox and stone are both attended with symptoms of nephritis ; and the same disease often affects all parts of the body, as the gout ; yet none call it by different names ; it is still gout, whether seated in the head, stomach, or extremities. All the different symptoms of disease are but varieties of the same thing. The same cause seldom produces similar effects in different constitutions, nor in the same constitution at different times ; and the same disease appears with different symptoms in different countries, among different nations, and in different climates and seasons, affecting all variously. As when a hurricane invades the oaks of the forest, all feel the shock, and each one stands, or falls, or breaks, or bends, according to its strength :—would a nosologist divide the cause of this storm into genera and species, from its different effects ?

To prescribe for the symptoms of disease leads to a most absurd mode of practice. If a patient, after amputation, complained of an itching or a burning sensation, in the foot; would a nosologist call it gout, and recommend warm flannels to be applied to the part affected?

If it is improper to specify the nature, genera, and species of disease, from the effects, or symptoms; nosology is entirely hypothetical; because on these is founded the whole nomenclature of diseases.

It is contrary to the nature of things, that effects, essentially different, can arise, *ceteris paribus*, from one cause. Effects from the same cause may vary in form, but can never change the nature of the cause. Animals and vegetables may change their appearance; but their nature, genera, and species, remain unchangeable. Animals have never imparted their specific characters to others of a different class; but one disease runs through the different classes, orders, genera and species of all, and all again unite in one. Hysteria, the *Proteus* of disease, appears in almost every possible form; and all the different forms of disease, appear in gout. Consumption is often transformed into head-ach, rheumatism, diarrhæa, and mania; and phrenitis, nephritis, gastritis, and enteritis, are frequent symptoms of yellow fever. Were we thus to examine all the diseases of Cullen's nosology, we should not find a single symptom, in any one disease, which

had not occurred in diseases of a different name. The changeable forms of disease render them incapable of division into genera and species, or of being designated by any unchangeable character. All the different forms must be taken for a whole; as soon as a division is attempted, the whole is thrown into confusion. "These forms," says my preceptor in medicine, "should no more be multiplied into different diseases, than the numerous and different effects of heat and light upon our globe, should be multiplied into a plurality of suns."*

If the classification of animals and vegetables; substances possessing uniformly the same properties, is still imperfect and uncertain; if the line of distinction between animate and inanimate matter, is yet undetermined, how absurd is it in nosologists, to attempt a classification of diseases, which are ever varying their seats and forms!

Nosological arrangements of diseases, have rendered the science of medicine incomprehensible, by unmeaning names, which are never understood, nor exemplified in practice; they have seduced the attention of the physician, from an exclusive attention to the state of the system. They have crowded the science of medicine, with mysterious diseases, such as *opprobria medicorum*, diseases *sui generis*, and a long class of incurables, all of

* Medical Inquiries and Observations. Vol. IV.

which have originated from nosology, and are only to be removed by adopting the unity of disease.

“ To pronounce a disease incurable, is often to render it so. The intermitten fever, if left to itself, would probably prove more frequently, and perhaps more speedily fatal, than cancers.”*

“ The want of success in the treatment of those diseases which are thought to be incurable, is occasioned in most cases, by an attachment to such theories as are imperfect, or erroneous.”†

Consumption, dropsy, gout, rheumatism and cancers, were long considered as incurable; but since these have been found to be only different effects of one primary disease, they have all yielded to the same mode of treatment.

The unity of disease, abolishes the whole class of incurables, and gives the greatest encouragement to believe, that what is practicable in one form of disease, may be accomplished in every other. A conviction of the truth of this principle, encourages the physician to persevere in the use of remedies; and renders him capable of administering to his patient, hope, at once animating and salutary.

Many patients have been abandoned by their physicians, from the notion of the disease being incurable; some of whom were afterwards cured by nature, accident, or quacks: and others suffered

* Dr. Rush's Inquiries and Observations. Vol. I.

† Ibid. Vol. II. Preface.

to fall victims to a disease, which probably might have been cured in a few days, had it never been distinguished by a place in nosology.

The names of diseases have often been the cause of their proving fatal, by leading the nosologist to treatment contrary to the state of the system. A case of what is called yellow fever, with depressed pulse, by a *nosologist*, is named typhus gravior; bark and wine are administered, which generally hasten the termination of the disease in death.

Another case of the same form of fever, appears with the symptoms of what has been called worm fever: pink-root tea is prescribed for it, which is as effectual in checking the progress of the disease, as it would be in calming the ocean.

If the yellow fever were to receive different names from the different seats and forms in which it appears, it would nearly monopolize all the names in Cullen's nosology. To treat all these forms differently, according to their names, would cause such diversity, perplexity and uncertainty in practice, as to render it also an incurable disease.

Nosology is the nurse of empiricism. Were physicians obliged to prescribe for the state of the system, without naming the disease, or if the Chinese custom of prescribing, from feeling the pulse only, without seeing, or conversing with the patient, were imposed on physicians, exclusive empiricism could no longer exist. Persons inattentive to the state of the system, would not attempt to cure

what they were ignorant of, and men of science only, would be consulted by all ranks of people.

The notion of a specific difference in the nature of disease, probably gave rise to the ridiculous practice of specific remedies. Black cat's blood for the cure of shingles, mares' milk for the whooping cough, sheeps' saffron for the small-pox, flower water for the dropsey—have all been prescribed by the most learned physicians of the last century; they were the offspring of nosology; they have all perished; may nosology speedily perish with them, never to revive again!

Nosology is the ignis fatuus of medicine; it is only seen in darkness; and whilst we pursue the fleeting phantom, it flies with equal speed, or finally leaves us plunged deeper in obscurity. “To describe diseases by any fixed or specific characters, is as impracticable as to measure the dimensions of a cloud in a windy day. Much mischief has been done by nosological arrangements of diseases. They erect imaginary boundaries between things which are of a homogeneous nature. They degrade the human understanding, by substituting simple perceptions, to its more dignified operations of judgment and reasoning. They gratify indolence in a physician, by fixing his attention upon the name of a disease, and thereby leading him to neglect the varying state of the system.”—“The whole materia medica is infected with the baneful consequences of the nomenclature of diseases; for every article in it

is pointed only against their names, and hence the origin of the numerous contradictions among authors who describe the virtues and doses of the same medicines.”*

A belief in the unity of disease, will always lead a physician to prescribe for its varying forms and stages. It will lead him likewise to attend to the effects of the medicines prescribed, and to continue or withhold them as circumstances may require. This mode of practice, it is true, will not be relished by the idle practitioner, for it requires frequent visits, and a close examination of symptoms in every form of disease; but medicine can never be perfected in any other way.

The benefits of adopting the unity of disease will appear farther, in its prostrating what is called the diagnosis of disease. A physician, instead of drawing on his memory for a hoard of definitions, attends only to the state of the system. A knowledge of this is soon acquired, and just prescriptions as soon follow. By knowing the cause of gout, pleurisy and malignant fevers to be the same, it would lead to depletion for each under equal circumstances; it would terminate disputes about disease and medicine among physicians, by directing their attention to a single object, and thus remove those controversies, in the medical science, which nosology is calculated to create.

By admitting but one disease, we likewise prostrate the too frequent use of the term, “complica-

* Dr. Rush's Medical Inquiries and Observations. Vol. IV.

tion of diseases." This idea has often led to a belief, that patients have had as many diseases, as they have had pains. Thus, yellow fever has been called phrenitis in the morning; gastritis at noon; colic at night; next nephritis; then rheumatism; and last of all convulsions. This supposed complication of diseases, vanishes on the fifth day in a black vomit; it is then known for the first time to be a yellow fever.

By admitting the unity of disease, we render it less necessary to investigate their remote causes. The business of a physician is to remove their effects only, except when the causes continue to act, and are subject to his controul. Thus the mariner lets go the halyards in a squall, without regarding the quarter from whence the wind comes. He knows full well that the wind is a unit, and that its mode of destruction is the same, whether it blows from the east, the west, the north, or the south.

Many have seen and lamented the uncertainty, complexity, and obscurity of medicine; but few have seen its simplicity and unity. Dr. Balfour reduced four diseases, viz. colera morbus, diarrhæa, dysentery and colic to the intestinal state of fever. These constitute the febris introversa of the discerning Sydenham, who likewise had a glimpse of the unity of disease, when he saw that all its different forms, in any season, assumed the type of the reigning epidemic. This distant view of unity affords

a more useful hint to physicians, than all the names in nosology ; it gives us warning when a malignant epidemic is prevalent, never to consider any disease as trifling, and it leads us by the sameness of its cause, to the same mode of cure.

It is said of Dr. Brown, that between the fifteenth and twentieth years of his medical studies, “ A very obscure gleam of light, like that of the first break of day, dawned upon him.”

Had this gleam been so bright as to have discovered to him, that his two forms of disease, sthenic and asthenic, were but one, it would have prevented many of the errors of his system. Mr. John Hunter’s “ incompatibility of action,” was a near approach to the unity of disease, and did honor to his extraordinary genius ; but truth on the simplicity and unity of disease, never appeared in its full lustre till it was unfolded in the lectures and publications of my respected preceptor,* from whom the principles contained in this dissertation have been imbibed ; for whose friendly instruction, both public and private, I shall ever feel the warmest gratitude ; to whom the medical world will always be indebted ; and whose name and memory will be dear to thousands, long—long after he has bidden adieu to all sublunary things.

* Dr. Rush.

F I N I S.



