

On the true value of experience in medicine : an introductory lecture delivered at the session of the Louisville Medical Institute, for 1838--'39 / by Henry Miller.

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Miller (H)

ON
THE TRUE VALUE
OF
EXPERIENCE IN MEDICINE;
AN INTRODUCTORY LECTURE,

DELIVERED

AT THE SESSION OF THE LOUISVILLE MEDICAL INSTITUTE.

FOR 1838--'39.

2844

BY HENRY MILLER, M. D.

PROFESSOR OF OBSTETRICS AND DISEASES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN
IN THE LOUISVILLE MEDICAL INSTITUTE.



Louisville, Ky.
PRENTICE & WEISSINGER, PRINTERS.

1838.



HALL OF THE MEDICAL INSTITUTE, Nov. 14, 1838.

Professor Henry Miller:

SIR—At a meeting of the Medical Class, of the Louisville Medical Institute, we, the undersigned, had the appreciable honor conferred on us, of being appointed their committee to express to you their high estimation of your able and eloquent Introductory Lecture; and that they and the public generally may enjoy the benefit of the truths it contains, to solicit a copy of the same for publication.

In doing so, we feel conscious that we are but paying a just tribute to its merits, and therefore hope you will gratify the wishes of the Class, and of yours, most respectfully,

ROBERT M. GRAHAM, }
GEORGE R. FALLIS, } *Committee.*
NORVIN GREEN, }

LIBRARY OF THE MEDICAL INSTITUTE, Nov. 15, 1838.

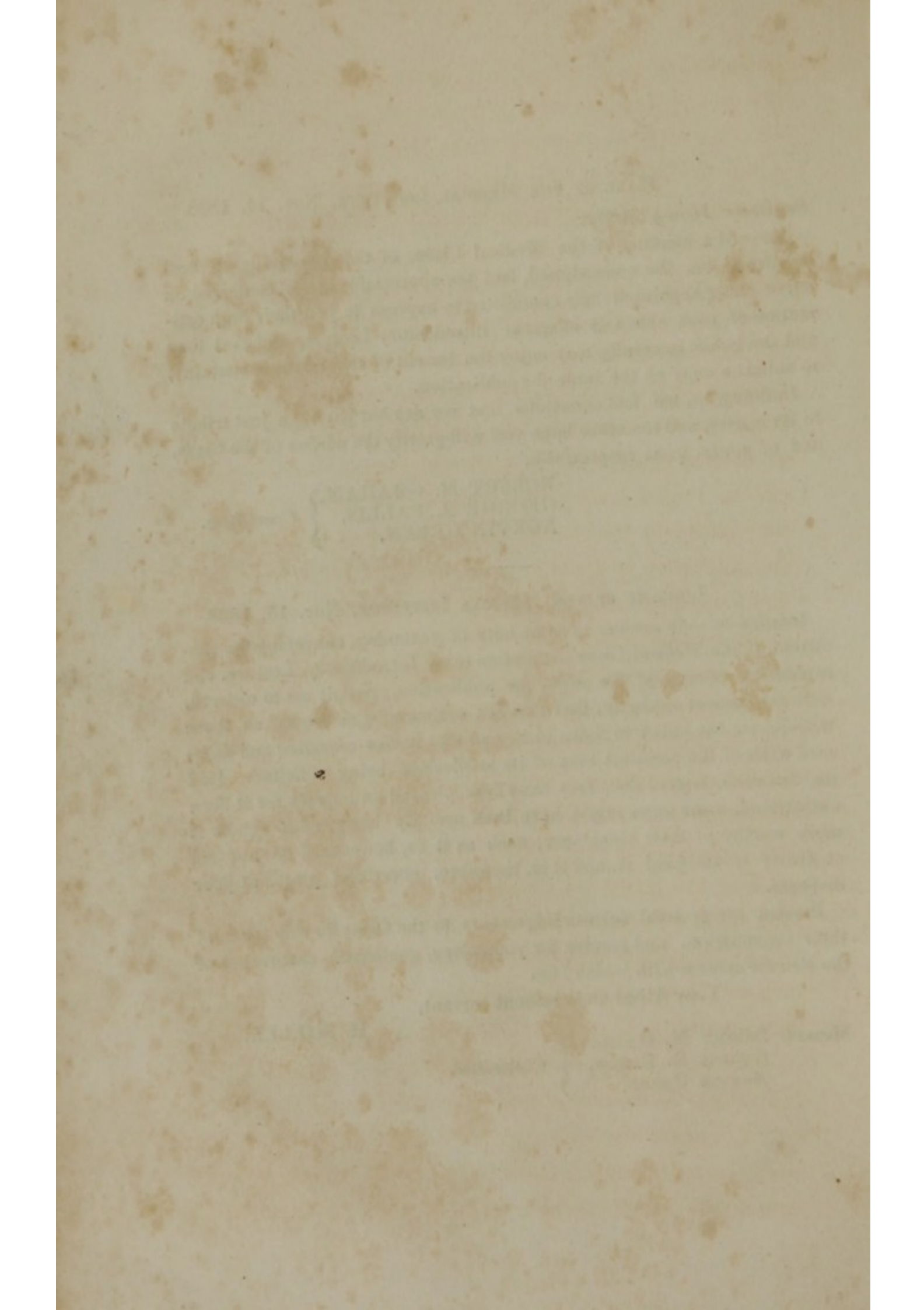
Gentlemen:—In answer to your note of yesterday, conveying the sentiment of the Medical Class in relation to my Introductory Lecture, and requesting a copy of the same for publication, permit me to observe, with the utmost sincerity, that I do not estimate it as highly as those who did me the honor to listen to it, and that it was *conceived* and *delivered* without the remotest idea of its publication being solicited. Had the favorable regard the Class have been pleased to express for it been anticipated, some pains might have been usefully bestowed to render it more worthy of their acceptance; such as it is, however, I do not feel at liberty to withhold it, and it is, therefore, cheerfully placed at your disposal.

Present my grateful acknowledgements to the Class for this token of their approbation, and receive for yourselves, gentlemen, assurances of the sincere esteem with which I am

Your friend and obedient servant,

H. MILLER.

Messrs. ROBERT M. GRAHAM, }
GEORGE R. FALLIS, } *Committee.*
NORVIN GREEN, }



AN INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

There is no subject, perhaps, concerning which popular opinion is more obstinately and apparently irremediably at fault, than *the true value of experience in Medicine*. We may descant as largely as we please on the claims of Medicine to the rank and dignity of a science; we may labor diligently, for years, to imbue those who enlist under its standards with its principles, and yet when they go forth, in full garniture, to apply these principles to practice, a severe probation inevitably awaits them. Too often, it will not be asked if they have been devoted to the study of their profession, with the industry and zeal, and for the period, and with the opportunities essential to success; but a single interrogatory as to *age*, or merely a glance at the countenance, if it bear the impress of juvenility, will decide their fitness or unfitness for the administrations of the sick chamber. The persuasion is deep rooted, that knowledge and skill in Medicine are commensurate with the *years* that have been spent in its service; that gray hairs especially betoken a luxuriant crop of wisdom, whose dictums are oracular, and in whose counsels there is safety.

This preference of the aged over the youthful physician is natural, and, with the proper restrictions, merited; but it will not be unprofitable to inquire into the qualities necessary to entitle medical experience to our confidence, or even to render it worthy the appellation. Such an inquiry will aid us in de-

termining the intrinsic worth of experience in Medicine in the abstract, and to what extent it is really enjoyed by the great multitude of those, who are most clamorous in their commendations of it, and most rigorous in exacting the obedience which they suppose due to themselves as its fortunate possessors.

The first and most essential quality of valuable experience, which we shall mention, is, *that it grow out of an intelligent and discriminating observation of the phenomena that are its objects*. These phenomena are the product of the action of external agents on the human system, and the object of investigation is the discovery of the order of their sequence, or the assigning of a cause for each successive effect that may be developed. The external agents, whose effects on the system come under observation, are 1st. Such as affect it deleteriously, becoming causes of disease; and 2d. Such as act remedially, counteracting the first and conducing to the restoration of health. Now, in each of these departments of inquiry, great circumspection is needed to guard against the numerous sources of fallacy, which are ever liable to vitiate and render nugatory the lessons of experience. Are we concerned to detect agents of the first class, and trace their effects on the system in any individual case? The connexion between the disease before us and the cause which we assign for it may have no other than an imaginary existence, and yet the evidence collected in a hasty examination may be regarded, by a superficial inquirer, as demonstrative of its reality. The error which may be easily committed here is accusing as the morbid a certain cause, for no other reason than its propinquity to the disease;—the latest irregularity or disturbing influence to which the patient may have been exposed, is apt to be arraigned as the cause of his malady, while it may, in truth, have no connexion whatever with it, or at most have

only favored its germination. But if the search after morbid causes may be frustrated, much more difficult is the tracing of their effects on the system, for, these are evolved in obedience to the vital laws which govern its several component parts. All diseases, however simple, are composed of a number of phenomena successively arising, between which such a relation exists as authorises us to consider that which immediately precedes the *cause* of that which follows. In other words, disease is a catenation of morbid phenomena, and the object of our researches is the discovery of the order of their succession. Nor is this merely a curious inquiry;—on its successful prosecution depend all rational views of pathology and practice. Ignorance of any link in the morbid chain mutilates the whole; while the misplacement, or undue exaltation or depression of any one, leaves only a distorted perception of the disease, which cannot fail to influence prejudicially its remedial management. Of the liability to error in this respect many illustrations might be given, but one for the present must suffice. At a certain period of infantile growth dentition commences; the teeth, sufficiently perfected in the little recesses of the maxillary bones, pierce the gums and make their appearance in regular order. This process is usually accompanied with some tumefaction or pain of the gums; but a high degree of irritation may attend, and along with this may appear derangement of the digestive, circulating, and nervous functions, giving rise to four prominent morbid phenomena—inflammation of the gums, diarrhœa, fever, convulsions, observing a certain order of sequence, each being the effect of that which precedes. The discovery of the primary or precedent link in this morbid chain is of great therapeutical value,—because its removal may dissever the connection, and emancipate the sufferer from its manacles. Should a secondary or remote link engross the attention and care of the phy-

sician, the morbid association will not be uprooted, or have the sphere of its influence curtailed. Contemplating the phenomena of morbid dentition, should we, trusting to authority in high places, regard the chylopoetic derangement as the primary and essential affection, our remedies will be addressed to it. We should exhibit repeated doses of calomel and tartar emetic, to the neglect of the inflamed gums and dental sacs. But should we, fortunately for the patient, take a different and more rational view of this part of infantile pathology, and consider the dental irritation as the primary affection, we shall freely incise the gums, and often instantly, as if by enchantment, rescue our little patient from suffering and peril.

The other branch of investigation to which we have alluded, viz: the action of remedies on the system, is one of great difficulty and perplexity. At all periods in the history of medicine, the rage has been the discovery of *new* remedies. Earth, air and ocean, the vegetable, animal and mineral kingdoms have been ransacked—their products have been tortured in the Chemist's crucible, to extract some principle of wondrous potency, not without hope that nature might be betrayed into the revelation of an elixir, reversive of her irrevocable sentence, and conferring immortality on earth to man. Nor has this earnest search been without fruit—a multitude of substances, solid, liquid, and aeriform, have been discovered possessed of active sanative properties, but amidst this copious pharmacopœia, how many articles are there whose *modus operandi* is well understood, whose effects on the system, in health and disease, have been thoroughly investigated? With reference to any one article of the *Materia Medica*, is our knowledge of its properties so minute as to enable us to predict its precise operation in the various kinds and grades of disease to which it may be applied? To make correct observations on this sub-

ject is no child's play, nor is it the work of an individual or of a single generation. The effect of medicines is not the same in health as in disease,—in one disease as in another, and every disturbing or modifying influence is to be taken into the account, in all our inquiries to learn their true properties and remedial application.

Notwithstanding the advanced *age* if not *state* of medicine, it may well be doubted whether we are possessed of such accurate observations as to be acquainted with the precise value of a remedy, which has been employed and maintained its reputation longer than any other, albeit certain modern wise-acres have undertaken to decry it,—we mean *blood-letting*. The recent researches of Louis, conducted upon the principles of the numerical method, render it doubtful, at least, whether the lancet is as potent an agent in pneumonitis as it has been generally esteemed. With relation to this and every other therapeutical agent, there is need of additional observations, prosecuted, if not according to his plan, with the exactitude and in the philosophical spirit of the great French pathologist. Then, and not till then, will something like the same certainty, which distinguishes the physical sciences, be introduced into medicine. Doubtless, diseases are governed by laws as fixed and constant as those which control the motions of the heavenly bodies or the reciprocal action of the elementary atoms of matter upon each other. Relying upon the unchanging constancy of these laws, the astronomer can foretell the position of the former at the most distant periods, and the chemist can predict, with undoubting confidence, that when certain substances, whose relations he has investigated, are brought together, certain results will ensue. When the laws of the living organism are as well understood, with as much certainty as the chemist can foretell that the union of an acid and alkali will produce a neutral salt, shall the pathol-

ogist foresee the result, when disease and medicine, administered for its removal, are brought into juxtaposition.

This department of research is very far from having attained such perfection; but while, as already intimated, it is beset with difficulties, much of the uncertainty that attaches to it has arisen from errors which ought to have been avoided. Among these the most prolific is the simultaneous or successive administration of too great a number and variety of medicines in the treatment of a single disease, which renders it doubtful to which, if any, are to be ascribed the remedial effects produced. In such cases the cure is commonly awarded to the remedy last administered, when in reality the salutary turn in the malady may have resulted from a prior administration, or be independent of any thing art may have done. Even when the *methodus medendi* is simplified as far as possible, and a single remedy is relied on, its powers and value cannot be precisely estimated except by a series of careful comparative observations, made on the same disease submitted to it and entrusted to the curative powers of nature. A number of patients, for example, affected with any given disease, are treated by a certain remedy; they all recover and unite their testimony in favor of its marvelous efficiency; but no such evidence establishes the utility of the treatment, unless an equal number of similar cases, confided to the care of nature, have a less fortunate issue. In fact, the *vis medica-trix*, though it proved the *ignis fatuus* of some ingenious speculators in medicine, exercises a real influence in protecting the system from the invasion of diseases and conducting to their safe expulsion. It is a warder provided by benignant nature, whose assistance the physician may not contern, for it often performs cures the credit of which he takes to himself, and yet its pretensions are never ostentatiously blazoned, as his sometimes are. On this subject we might greatly enlarge,

but the premises are sufficiently broad to warrant the conclusion intended; viz. that experience in medicine is not, like certain liquors, necessarily improved by age. One may pursue it as a vocation for half a century, and yet, if his observations have been hastily and negligently made, his experience will be really less available than the well-trained stripling's whose beardlessness may be held in contempt.

The next quality of valuable experience in Medicine, which we shall notice is, *that it be engrafted upon a thorough acquaintance with the demonstrative branches of the science.* The most important and fundamental of these are Anatomy and Physiology, special and general, or the study of the structure and functions of the several organs of the system, including the organization and properties, vital and physical, of the elementary tissues which compose them. In ranking Physiology among the demonstrative sciences we are not chargeable with solecism in the slightest degree. The vis vitæ, which confers on organization its distinguishing properties, considered in the abstract, presents an exhaustless theme for speculation, but its results fall under the cognizance of the senses, and, in many important respects, are susceptible of demonstration. No other proof of this need now be referred to, than the circulation of the blood, which, simple as it is when unfolded, was an impenetrable mystery to physicians until demonstrated by the illustrious Harvey. Nor need we stop to observe how many crude notions of disease were dissipated, and what an effulgence of light was shed on practical Medicine and Surgery by this memorable discovery. The utility, we should rather say, the indispensable necessity of Anatomy and Physiology to Surgery is so obvious as to strike the most common observer, and the most unlettered peasant can perceive at once the absurdity of attempting its operative processes, without such preliminary knowledge. But this ne-

cessity is not the less real and urgent, because not so readily perceived, in the treatment of internal diseases falling within the province of the physician. Ignorant or but partially acquainted with these, how is he to detect even the *locality* of diseases, much less investigate the changes wrought by them in the different textures which may become their prey? The anatomical lesions, to which we allude, are sometimes the most characteristic distinction between diseases, possessing many symptoms in common, and may be regarded as their signet stamped on the body to establish their identity. Pre-admonished not only of the localities but tendencies of disease, the enlightened physician is put upon his guard, and, like a skilful general, concentrates his remedial forces on the assailed and suffering part. With little or no other knowledge of diseases than their symptoms or external manifestations, as they are paraded in a system of Nosology; relying upon the fugacious groups of these as they may be exhibited on the surface, his diagnoses must be ever liable to mistakes, and his treatment to mortification and defeat. No single principle or agency begins and conducts to its issue any function of the system; but different forces are employed and mechanism is called into requisition to facilitate their action. When any function is impeded, therefore, how shall he presume to rectify it who knows not wherein the impediment consists?

From the foregoing considerations it follows that the medical experience which is not based upon Anatomy and Physiology, is, if not utterly worthless, at least destitute of that which alone can impart to it intrinsic and durable value, and, though it may be a sexagenarian, is not entitled to flaunt itself in the presence of its youthful congener, when built on the proper foundation. Is, then, it may be asked, popular observation in Medicine to be slighted as worthless? The question invites us to tread upon delicate ground, where if we look

not well to our footsteps, a host of buzzing assailants may be invoked; but we shall not turn aside to escape their din or to avoid their missiles. In favor of unprofessional experimenters it must be conceded that their adventures have sometimes led to the discovery of new remedies, or unknown medicinal uses of articles already enrolled in the catalogue of the *Materia Medica*. But of all of them, from Berkley, who celebrated the praises of tar water, down to the beldams of our own day, who chant the wonder-working virtues of their favorite herbs, and who look askance upon the physician less blessed with such precious lore, and of *all* who pretend to a knowledge of diseases and their cure, derived from experience only, it may be fearlessly affirmed that their experience is valueless to themselves and to the world, except as it may excite to investigation those who are competent to the task. Centuries of observation would not materially enrich such practitioners or transform them into *physicians*, because their experience must ever be deficient in an essential quality; viz., accurate discrimination between diseases, and discernment between the effects of remedies, and the spontaneous operations of nature, and this could not be taught them by a thousand "campaigns against the sick." For them it is sufficient evidence of identity that cases should agree in possessing any one symptom prominently in common. Is an individual, for example, affected with cough? None of these ever ready prescribers is so poor in resources as not to possess a sovereign specific for it and confirm its recommendation by citing hundreds of cases, *exactly similar*, "as like as cherry is to cherry," in which its marvelous powers were displayed. Now, "this is an evil among all things that are done under the sun," and wo to the poor physician who, in the course of his treatment of a chronic affection of this nature, is favored with the visits of such characters to his patient. Our distinguished countryman, Dr.

Rush, was in the habit of transferring to his note book every popular nostrum he collected; but in copying his example, we should feel ourselves sinning against ink and paper.

Another quality of really valuable experience in Medicine is, *that its teachings be untinged by theoretical prepossessions.* It has been observed, indeed, that to theorize is to think, and that consequently, to forbid it is to put an embargo on the mind and chain it in hopeless sterility. It is not, however, the wings of thought that we would clip, nor would we discourage the loftiest intellectual excursions; but fancy should not usurp the throne of judgment, and analogical reasoning displace legitimate deduction. What we deprecate, under the denomination of theory, is premature generalization—the extension of a principle, though true, to the encroachment upon or total exclusion of others, whose influence must be duly estimated in all our attempts to seize and analyze the complex problems of Pathology. Evidence of the strong propensity to theorize, in this view of it, and of its pernicious tendency, might be gathered from the pages of almost every writer and teacher who has figured in Medicine. The *vis medicatrix naturæ*, for example, in the plastic hands of the celebrated Cullen, was moulded to a giant endued with intelligence, whose intermediation explained many occurrences in disease, otherwise inexplicable by him. To rescue their heroes from the dangers into which they are precipitated by their daring, the epic writers have found it convenient to employ the intervention of the gods;—Telemachus, overthrown by Hippias, with whom he madly adventured to match his strength, receives succour from Minerva, who despatches the swift messenger of the gods to his aid, and no sooner does she cover him with the shield of the goddess than he becomes sensible of the infusion of new vigor, and his invigorated struggles prevail over his adversary. With Dr. Cullen the *vis med-*

icatrix stood in stead of the celestial machinery of the poets; whenever a phenomenon occurred, which could not be otherwise accounted for, it was attributed to the intervention of this principle. It is apparent at once how pernicious such a license in medical reasoning must have been, and our astonishment now is that it should ever have been tolerated. But since the curtain dropped upon the vis medicatrix, or, more properly speaking, since it contracted to its proper dimensions, how many theories have appeared on the stage, swelled into giants, and lorded it over the whole length and breadth of Pathology! Time would fail us to enumerate them; and perhaps the tendency to theorize in Medicine and its pernicious results, cannot be better illustrated than by the most instructive exhibition, furnished by an eminent living pathologist, M. Broussais, who, a few years ago, bid fair to sway the sceptre of universal empire. Discovering in the course of his numerous post mortem examinations, that inflammation of the alimentary mucous membrane is of frequent occurrence, Broussais had his attention specially directed to this particular lesion. Though other organs and tissues did not escape his observation, the digestive, and especially their lining membrane soon became the paramount object of his researches, and it is not wonderful that *gastro-enterite* should have been so uniformly revealed by his exploring scalpel. Who ever went in quest of hobgoblins and returned without an adventure? Not alone in Padua, "far beyond the sea," is the art "that none may name" acquired; but "the viewless forms of air" bow to the bidding of whoever goes in search of them, with a strong presentiment that they will be found of him. Having learned that gastro-enteritis exists in many cases of fever, and beginning hence to ascribe to it an important part in the production of its phenomena, it was no difficult stretch of imagination to discover it in the slightest blush of redness in the

mucous membrane, or, in the absence of this, in its softening, or other alteration of texture. By such a train of inquiry, Broussais came, at length, to lay down as one of his established propositions in Medicine, "that all the essential fevers of authors are nothing more than *gastro-enterites*; that the inflammation, when unattended with pain, has been overlooked, and when pain is present, has been considered as an accident of fever, instead of the disease itself, which it really is:" in other words, that there is no such thing as idiopathic fever, what has been regarded as such being nothing more nor less than inflammation of the gastro-intestinal mucous membrane. And to this conclusion did M. B. become so thoroughly wedded, that he even supposes the existence of periodical gastro-enteritis to account for the type of intermittent fevers!

It must not be supposed that the physician addicted to theory, is mounted upon a harmless hobby, or that he jeopardises only his own neck; his patient, unluckily, must pay for his amblings. In the case of the Broussaist, for example, with the fear of gastro-enteritis before his eyes, he cannot venture to administer any efficient, or *incendiary* remedies, as his theory denominates them, lest the inflammation that lies in the very threshold should be aggravated, and therefore he restricts himself to demulcents—gum water, starvation, and leeching. Even in intermittent fever, for this reason, he refrains from quinine, or employs it with fear and trembling, notwithstanding the undoubted evidence of its innocence and efficacy.

In alluding to the general complexion of the doctrine and practice of Broussais, it is not our design to examine or discuss them critically, but to hold them up as a beacon to warn against shipwreck on the rock to which the voyage of medical experience is exposed—the rock of Theory. As well may it be expected that the rays of light will pass from one medium

to another of different density, without undergoing refraction, as that the rays of science will penetrate the mind, and stamp images true to nature on its tablets, when theory has taken possession of it.

Having now mentioned some of the qualities of valuable experience in Medicine, let us inquire into the character of that ordinarily attained by physicians, which is so much vaunted and so little understood. The popular conception is, as we have said, that a physician's acquisitions are in proportion to the number of observations he has made, as if he knows nothing as he ought except what he has learned for himself; and the *senior* members of the profession not unfrequently endorse this, by the admission that their juniors are clever, promising men, coupled with the significant intimation that they *lack experience*. It is true that Medicine is or ought to be only a collection of *facts* and *principles*, which are nothing but general facts, ascertained by the comparison and classification of individual ones. But how many of these facts is it the privilege of any single person to furnish? Probably he who plumes himself most on his experience has not contributed a solitary new fact, although in his ignorance of the labors of his predecessors, he may imagine that he has done wonders. He, in common with his brother who started after him, is continually drawing upon the great fountain of facts which the experience of ages has accumulated, and which possesses this property of the Pierian, that shallow draughts intoxicate the brain, and drinking largely sobers us again. He has enjoyed, indeed, multiplied opportunities of verifying, and not a few of rectifying the observations of those who preceded him. With regard to the medicines especially, which he has been in the habit of using, he has not been without the means of ascertaining, with greater precision, their shades of difference, the indications for their employment, and the effects

which they may be relied on to produce, in the diversified morbid states for which he has daily administered them. But is Medicine ordinarily practised in the philosophical spirit—the chief attribute of which is freedom from theoretical prepossessions and a stern determination to follow nature in the pursuit of facts, without which advancement in science is impossible? We fear, or rather we *know* that it is not. The mass of physicians rest satisfied with the attainments they make during their pupilage, or if they look with unwonted interest into the manifold phenomena which court their inspection, too often they see through the spectacles of theory, which moulds their pliant observations to its shape. What advantage, then, has the experienced over the inexperienced physician? Viewed in the light of sober truth, he has not generally whereof to boast. He is more skilled in the *tactics* of his profession; he does not necessarily know *more*—he may know *less*; he has only been drilled in the application of knowledge derived from others. A certain amount of this training is a most desirable part of medical education, not only because it secures to the young practitioner the confidence of his patient, when he can affirm with truth he knows for himself, but because it saves him from the mortification which he never fails to experience from the awkwardness and lapses he commits in the outset of his independent career. A portion of his drill should be directed to the cultivation of manual dexterity, in the performance of at least the minor operations of Surgery. We have heard of graduates in Medicine, who had never bled, extracted a tooth, or felt a pulse, nor had access to the bedside of the sick, to catch even a glimpse of diseases before they sallied forth with their commission to battle with them. Should this ever become a portion of history, it will hardly be credited, for such defective preparation for the most responsible of all duties will not long be tolerated; it will

be practically unknown to the next generation. May we not hope that the spirit of real reform in Medicine, which has now been awakened, will not be appeased until the great body of physicians, however widely dispersed, are excited to the adoption of the proper methods to improve the science, and to produce an *experience* more valuable than that of which they now vainly boast. Such as they can now bring forward, when weighed in the impartial balance of reason, has no superiority over that of the novice, whose indoctrination is as thorough as it might be.

The interests of science and humanity demand that medical experience, as it has hitherto existed, should be stripped of its meretricious disguises and exhibited in its true colours. So long as it shall be permitted to measure its altitude by length of years, physicians will be content to quietly sit down, until time shall bestow the gray hairs and wrinkles, which will be their passport to the honors and emoluments of their profession. But how shall the mask be torn from it and the public mind be disabused? Not by lectures or any other form of argumentative appeal, for it is too securely ensconced in the immemorial recognition of its claims, and its exposure exacts a longer process of ratiocination, than the multitude are careful or competent to institute. But there is a form of appeal, which, addressing itself to the perceptions of every one, will be heard and prove efficient; we allude to the increasing number of young men, who go forth annually from our Medical schools, bearing not merely the honors but the mature fruits of the science, and prepared, in a good degree, to dispense them at once to the sick. For this they are indebted to the extension of the means of clinical instruction, and the improved methods of imparting it, familiarizing them with disease and initiating them into the manual exercises of the profession, which, though only the *opera minora*, is the sum of what often passes current as experience in Medicine.

Such experience cannot continue to receive the tribute it has heretofore exacted; nay, to preserve its existence as a badge of distinction, those who aspire to, must merit its prerogatives by the actual contributions they make to Medicine, by the discovery of new truths or the correction of errors, which have hitherto disfigured it. To them and to them alone rightfully belongs the rank of Nestors in their profession; they, and only they may claim to be heard on account of their experience in Medicine.

The present may be characterised as the epoch of *sensible* teaching and learning in Medicine, and if we were called on to state what has contributed most to accelerate its escape from the Egyptian darkness and bondage in which it was held for so many centuries, and to raise it to the high and ennobling communion it now enjoys with its kindred physical sciences, we should not hesitate to hail *hospitals* as its deliverers. The opportunities which these institutions have afforded for the accurate observation of the phenomena of diseases, their seats, and the structural changes wrought by them, as revealed by post mortem examinations, and for the strict observance of the rules essential to a correct appreciation of the effects of remedies, have extended the reign of the inductive method over Medicine, and the period is not far distant when a medical school, without such opportunities, will be regarded as a grave and learned mockery.

It is on account of my deep conviction of the truth of this prediction that I doubt not that the people, not only of Kentucky, but of the great West, will ere long acknowledge themselves beneficiaries of the unparalleled munificence of the Council of Louisville, in accordance with the noble public spirit and liberality of the citizens, calling into existence the Medical Institute of Louisville. The necessity for hospitals and the number of those who are dependent upon their charities for nursing and medical treatment, will always be multi-

plied by the population, and still more by the extent of the business of our commercial marts, because such as are the bones and sinews of trade generally make the least preparation for reverses, and are most apt to be deprived of the solace of friends and the comforts of home, when overtaken by sickness. It is for this reason that our hospital already receives and provides for a greater number of the sick than that of a neighboring city, whose population only is greater. If, in her infancy, when she is just beginning to wield her giant energies, our city has been crowned the "Empress" of the West, what, think you, will be the extent and glory of her dominion when she shall attain to the measure of her full stature? And her hospitals, growing with her growth, will become schools of practical Medicine, whither the youth of the great valley will resort for instruction. But not to indulge further in anticipations which may be pronounced fanciful, we have in possession a hospital which is already subsidiary to medical education, and the Trustees have only to require of *all* its physicians and surgeons to deliver clinical lectures, or at least to expound to students visiting its wards the nature of the diseases under treatment, and disclose their *methodus medendi*, in order to attract pupils throughout the year, and the propriety of such a requirement is understood to be now under advisement.

In adverting to the advantages of Louisville and predicting success to the Medical Institute, I shall not be charged, I hope, with glorifying my able colleagues, much less my humble self. I know that all flesh is grass, and the glory thereof the flower of grass; the Institute does not depend on the frail tenure of the lives of its present professors,—much less does it breathe through the nostrils of a single one, but fostered by the affection of an intelligent and enterprising community, it derives its vitality from the immutable fiat of nature.

