

Memoir of the life of the late Jonathan Pereira ...

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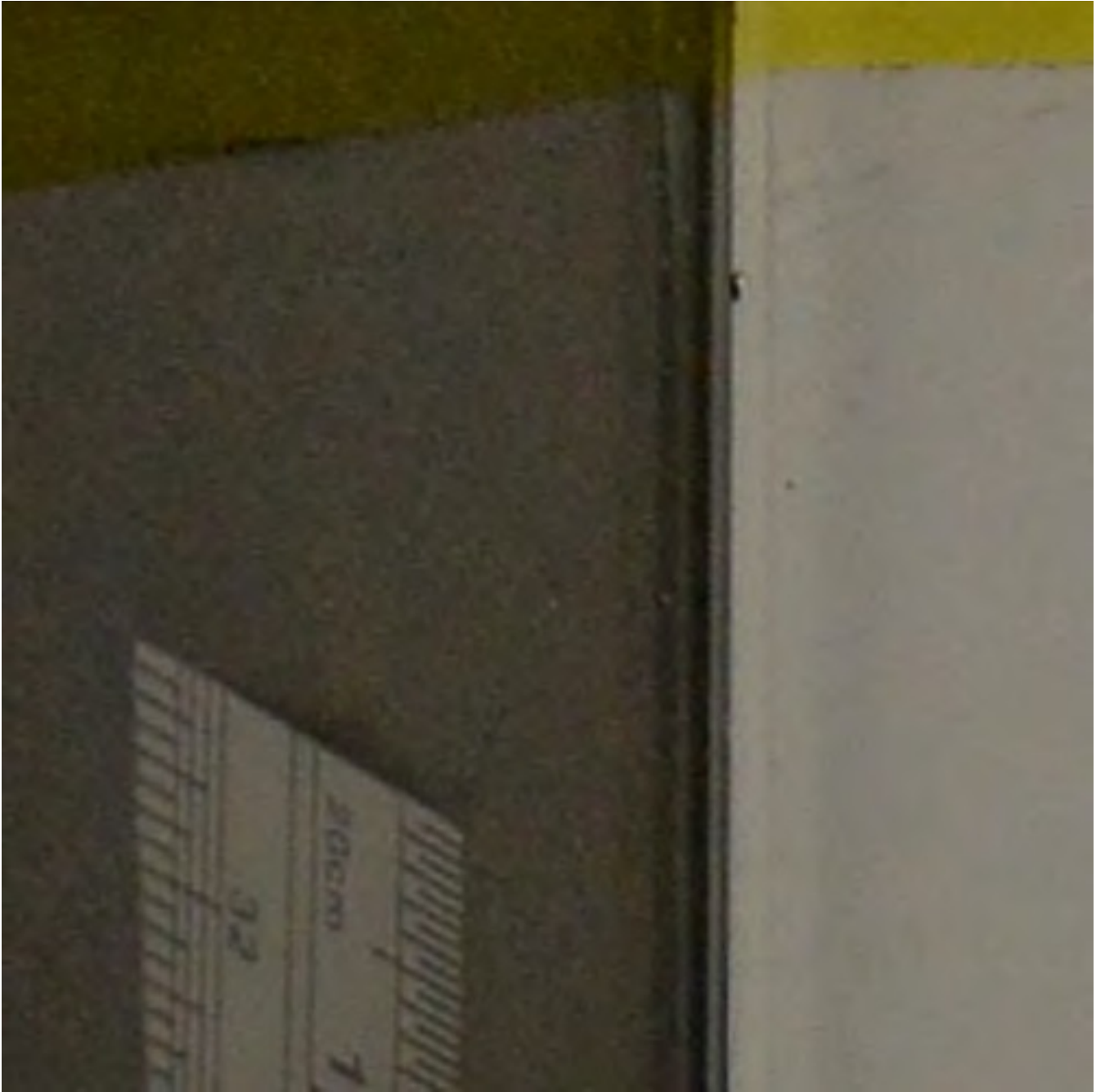
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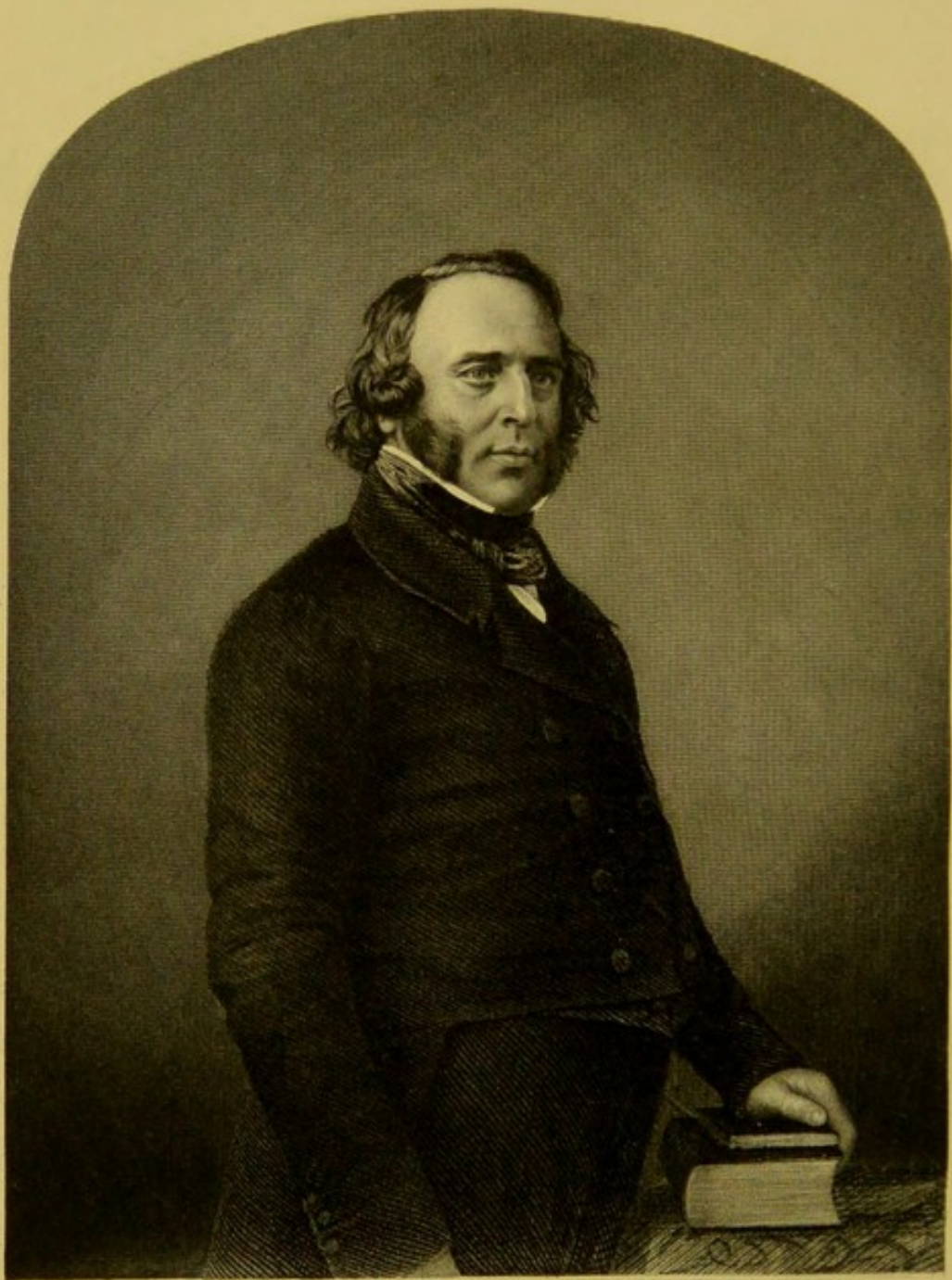
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Jas Perceival

MEMOIR
OF
THE LIFE

OF THE LATE

JONATHAN PEREIRA, M.D., F.R.S., F.L.S.,

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS, LONDON;

VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL MEDICAL AND CHIRURGICAL SOCIETY;

HONORARY MEMBER OF THE PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETIES OF GREAT BRITAIN, ST. PETERS-
BURGH, AND PORTUGAL; OF THE MEDICAL AND PHYSICAL SOCIETY OF ERLANGEN, AND OF THE
NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION OF HESSE;

CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY OF PHARMACY OF PARIS;

EXAMINER IN MATERIA MEDICA AND PHARMACY TO THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON;

PHYSICIAN TO THE LONDON HOSPITAL,

&c. &c. &c.

Extracted from the Pharmaceutical Journal for March, 1853.

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MEMOIR OF THE LIFE
OF
THE LATE JONATHAN PEREIRA,

M.D., F.R.S., F.L.S., &c. &c. &c.

From the Pharmaceutical Journal.

THE decease of a Physician, whose talent and assiduity have raised him to eminence, is under any circumstances felt by his patients and friends to be a severe calamity. This is especially the case when the event occurs with little or no warning, in the prime of life, during the full enjoyment of the mental faculties and bodily energy, and in the midst of researches and professional avocations calculated to advance science and benefit mankind.

It is not merely in his capacity as a Physician that the memory of Dr. Pereira claims our respect, and that his early removal from the scene of his labours is a source of regret and disappointment. So much of his attention had been directed to that branch of science which constitutes the link between Pharmacy and the practice of medicine—namely, the study and classification of the agents employed in the treatment of disease—that his researches were valuable alike to the Pharmaceutist and to the Medical Practitioner. He was an authority to whom both appealed with confidence in cases of doubt, and from whom the entire profession derived an important accession to the store of scientific and practical knowledge in the department in which he stood pre-eminent.

Although medical practice was his ultimate object, he was much engaged (especially during the early part of his career) in teaching Chemistry and Materia Medica; and, of late years, whilst rising in fame and popularity as a Physician, he was conferring on the Pharmaceutical Society the benefit of his experience and practical knowledge as its Professor of Materia Medica. In this latter capacity he became so much identified with the progress of Pharmaceutical education in this country, and his services were of so much importance to the Society, that a memoir of his life, with an account of his progress in his professional career, is due to the readers of this Journal.

Jonathan Pereira was born on the 22nd of May, 1804, in the parish of Shoreditch, London. At about ten years of age he was placed in a classical academy in Queen Street, Finsbury, where he remained about four years; he there made the best use of the advantages he enjoyed, and was considered one of the most promising pupils in the school. His preliminary education, however, was not in accordance with the position he was destined to occupy in after life; his father, who was a London merchant and an underwriter at Lloyd's, being, at that time, reduced from affluence to comparatively straitened circumstances, owing to some unfortunate speculations in which he had embarked.

Pereira was removed from school at the early age of fifteen and articled to Mr. Latham, a Navy Surgeon, then in general practice in the City Road. Before the expiration of three years this gentleman became the subject of mental derangement, and the indentures of his pupil were cancelled. During this short period of his apprenticeship the young student was indefatigable in the pursuit

of his classical studies, and drew up a vocabulary of the terms commonly employed in medical literature.

In 1821 he became a student at the Aldersgate General Dispensary, and attended the lectures of Dr. Clutterbuck on Chemistry, *Materia Medica*, and the Practice of Medicine, Dr. Birkbeck on Natural Philosophy, and Dr. Lambe on Botany. He was likewise a pupil at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, where he entered to the Surgical practice. Early in 1823 a vacancy occurred in the office of Apothecary at the Aldersgate Street Dispensary, for which he was strongly advised by Dr. Clutterbuck and other medical friends to become a candidate. The licence of the Society of Apothecaries, however, being an essential qualification, he applied himself assiduously to the task of preparing for the examination, which he passed on the 6th of March, 1823, in the nineteenth year of his age, and immediately commenced an active canvass for the post he desired to obtain. He was strongly supported by the medical officers of the Institution, and was ultimately elected without opposition.

He had not long been Apothecary at the General Dispensary before he established a class of pupils, to whom he gave private instruction preparatory to their examination. This undertaking was attended with eminent success, and afforded an opportunity for the development of his talents as a teacher. In furtherance of his object he published several works for the use of students, namely, a Translation of the London Pharmacopœia of 1824, with a scientific description of the Preparations, their re-actions and decompositions; *Selecta e Præscriptis*, a small work which we have occasion frequently to recommend to our juvenile readers, the eleventh edition of which appeared in 1851; *A Manual for the use of Students*, which was afterwards (by permission) adopted and edited by Dr. Steggall; and *A general Table of Atomic Numbers, with an Introduction to the Atomic Theory*. These works laid the foundation of his reputation as a teacher, and evinced his aptitude for scientific research.

On the 3d of June, 1825, he became a Member of the College of Surgeons, and in 1826 he succeeded Dr. Clutterbuck as lecturer on Chemistry at the Aldersgate Street Dispensary. His first lecture was devoted to an account of the rise and progress of Chemistry from the earliest date to which the history of the science could be traced, and comprised a notice of the latest discoveries. The theatre was crowded to excess, and the lecture created no little sensation from the profusion of illustrations, the amount of information, and the style of his delivery. Among other illustrations he exhibited bromine, which had recently been discovered by Balard, of Montpellier.

In the course of his scientific researches in *Materia Medica* he had occasion to consult French and German authors, and accordingly he engaged tutors to instruct him in these languages. In the course of about two years from this time he had become familiar with all the important facts then known connected with the subject of *Materia Medica*, and had made some progress in classifying and arranging these facts on scientific principles, intending to embody the result of his labours in a comprehensive and voluminous work. To this task he applied himself with great industry, rising at six in the morning and generally devoting about sixteen hours a-day to his studies. He had a retentive memory, and made a practice of noting down all the facts which he collected together, with references to the authors or other authorities from which the information was derived.

In this manner he accumulated the materials for his great work, *The Elements of Materia Medica*, which so completely engrossed his attention that for several years after 1827 he did not appear before the public as an author. In 1828, however, he commenced a course of lectures on *Materia Medica* at the Dispensary, and his class soon became the largest in London, his merits as a teacher being fully appreciated by his pupils. For several years he continued from time to time to revise and rewrite his lectures, adding such fresh facts or im-

provements as came under his notice; and thus advancing at the same time his forthcoming work, of which the lectures were the foundation.

Early in the year 1832 he resigned the office of Apothecary to the Dispensary, and on this occasion a silver salver was presented to him by the Governors of that Institution, as a memento of their regard and esteem. In the following September he married, and established himself in general practice in Aldersgate Street.

In the winter of 1832 he became Professor of *Materia Medica* in the New Medical School in Aldersgate Street; and at the same period succeeded Dr. Gordon as Lecturer on Chemistry at the London Hospital. During the time that he was lecturing at the Aldersgate School, Dr. Cummin, who was the Lecturer on Forensic Medicine, and also Editor of the *Medical Gazette*, induced him to consent to the publication of his lectures in that Journal. At the time this arrangement was made, *The Elements of Materia Medica* had recently been commenced, and a small portion was already printed, which the author made up his mind to sacrifice, as he thought the publication of his lectures in the first instance in the *Medical Gazette* would facilitate the completion of his labours, and pave the way for the more complete work. The lectures appeared in the *Medical Gazette* in the years 1835-6-7, and they contributed greatly to raise his reputation abroad as well as in this country.

His class at the Aldersgate School became so numerous that he deemed it expedient to build a new theatre, which he did at an expense of about £700. His income from lecturing amounted at that time to upwards of £1000 per annum, and some of his friends advised him to pause before sacrificing so large a proportion of a year's income in a building in which he had no permanent interest, and for which he could not expect to be reimbursed in the event of his retiring from his office. But he was not to be diverted from his purpose. It was his custom throughout life, when engaged in any important undertaking in which he felt a deep interest, to throw aside minor considerations, and never to be swayed by mercenary feelings in the prosecution of the great object before him. Accordingly he completed the theatre. Shortly afterwards he was solicited by some of the authorities of St. Bartholomew's Hospital to join their school as Professor of Chemistry and *Materia Medica*. To this he assented, and prepared a syllabus of his intended lectures, which was published, and the necessary arrangements were completed. It was, however, intimated to him that, according to the bye-laws of the hospital, it was necessary that he should, on becoming professor, relinquish his professorships in other institutions. This he declined to do; upon which the governors of St. Bartholomew's Hospital were summoned to consider the subject, with a view of suspending the bye-law in that instance in order to secure so desirable an addition to their staff. Some discussion arose in the medical journals, in which the relaxation of the law was advocated in the *Medical Gazette*, while the editor of the *Lancet* took an opposite view of the case, and represented it as an act of favouritism to a rising professor. It was ultimately decided that the bye-law could not be entirely suspended, although some modification of it was agreed to, which, however, was not satisfactory to Pereira, who declined to relinquish his position as lecturer at the London Hospital, and abandoned his intention of embarking in the new office. He nevertheless left the Aldersgate School about a year afterwards.

The appearance of the lectures on *Materia Medica* in the *Medical Gazette* increased the popularity of the author, and the anxiety of Messrs. Longman, his publishers, to launch the *Elements*, the first volume of which appeared in 1839, and the entire edition was sold before the appearance of the second volume in 1840. The second edition of the work was published in 1842.

In the year 1840 he made arrangements for leaving London for two years, for the purpose of graduating in one of the universities in Scotland, when, unexpectedly, the prospect of a vacancy in the office of Assistant-Physician to the

London Hospital, presented itself. This was a position to which he had for some years aspired, although he did not anticipate that so early an opening would have occurred. In order to become a candidate it was necessary that he should be a licentiate of the College of Physicians, and an examination was about to take place in a week or ten days from the time that the prospect of a vacancy at the Hospital was made known. No time was to be lost: he waited on the President of the College, Sir Henry Halford, to ascertain the latest day on which he could be allowed to present himself, and an indulgence of two or three days was granted. He applied himself assiduously to the task of preparing for the examination, and laboured day and night in refreshing his memory on the details of the subjects on which his qualifications were to be tested. Although his natural energy and ability supported him in this arduous undertaking, it was not without some misgivings that he presented himself for examination at the College on so short a notice; and he had the satisfaction of being congratulated afterwards on having passed with flying colours. Indeed, on his favourite subject, *Materia Medica*, Sir Henry Halford and the other examiners declined examining him.

His intended visit to Scotland was of necessity abandoned, and as it was not likely, in the event of his obtaining the appointment at the London Hospital, that he would be able to comply with the regulations of a British University, he applied for a degree at Erlangen, and received his diploma a few weeks after he had become a licentiate of the College of Physicians.

As soon as the vacancy at the hospital was declared he commenced his canvass, which at first was not very encouraging, and, for a short time, he entertained doubts as to the expediency of proceeding any further, but by the earnest solicitations of his friends he was induced to persevere, and eventually walked over the course on the 3d of March, 1841.

Dr. Pereira was appointed examiner in *Materia Medica* at the London University in the year 1839.

Most of the particulars above detailed have been published in notices in the *Lancet*, the *Medical Times and Gazette*, and other journals. We now arrive at a period in the life of Dr. Pereira during which his connection with the Pharmaceutical Society enabled us from personal knowledge to estimate the great value of his services as a Professor, and his peculiar tact and energy in scientific researches.

Early in the year 1842, prior to the opening of the School of Pharmacy at Bloomsbury Square, several Professors kindly delivered introductory lectures, with a view of promoting the undertaking, and pointing out the advantages to be anticipated from the system of education which the Society was about to introduce. On the 30th of March in that year, Dr. Pereira delivered one of these lectures, and selected for his subject "The Modern Discoveries in *Materia Medica*." The amount of the information comprised in this lecture, the arrangement of the subject, the completeness of the illustrations, and the style of delivery, produced a deep and lasting impression on the Members present, who made up their minds at once, that Dr. Pereira would be an invaluable acquisition to the School, and that every effort must be made to prevail on him to become one of its Professors. This, however, could not be effected immediately, as arrangements had already been completed for opening the School with three short courses of lectures, namely, on Medical Botany and *Materia Medica*, by Dr. A. T. Thomson; Chemistry, by Mr. Fownes; and Pharmacy, by Mr. Redwood. Although it was not deemed expedient to disturb the plans which had been made for that session, a general desire was expressed that Dr. Pereira would deliver a few evening lectures on any subject which he might think appropriate, and likely to prove interesting. Accordingly, in the months of August and September in the same year, he delivered two lectures "On the Elementary Composition of Foods." These lectures he afterwards greatly

amplified, and published in the form of an octavo work of 541 pages, entitled, *A Treatise on Food and Diet*, with Observations on the Dietetical Regimen suited for Disordered States of the Digestive Organs, and an account of the Dietaries of some of the principal Metropolitan and other establishments for paupers, lunatics, criminals, children, the sick, &c.

In March, April, and August, 1843, he delivered three lectures on the Polarization of Light, and pointed out some practically useful applications of the science, as furnishing a mode of distinguishing varieties of oils, turpentine, balsams, and other substances or fluids. The changes of colour produced by the rotation of the polariscope he investigated and described, using the oxyhydrogen microscope to exhibit these phenomena. The subject was one in which the doctor took great interest, and he continued to apply the principles which he had laid down in all his subsequent pharmacological investigations to which they were applicable. In the preparation and illustration of the lectures, he spared neither labour nor expense, and published them in an enlarged form as a Treatise, which is well known and esteemed by scientific men, although the subject was too abstruse and complicated to be appreciated as it deserved, by the audience before whom the lectures were delivered.

In the year 1843 Dr. Pereira became Professor of *Materia Medica* to the Pharmaceutical Society, and delivered his introductory lecture in the month of September. His first course of lectures in the School of Pharmacy was numerously attended by the Members and Associates of the Society. It was the first complete course of lectures on *Materia Medica* addressed to Pharmacists which had been delivered in this country. The treatment of the subject was entirely different from that adopted at the London Hospital and other medical schools, where more than half the course is devoted to therapeutics and a detail of the medical properties of drugs, while their natural history and chemical characters are treated in a more cursory manner, as secondary in importance. Dr. Pereira knew where to draw the line, and while he did not omit therapeutics altogether, he treated of the action of medicines in general terms, giving such information as the dispenser of medicines ought to possess, without detailing the symptoms and precise circumstances requiring the administration of certain remedies. The knowledge required by the Pharmacist on this branch of the subject being chiefly of a precautionary nature, enough was stated to impress him with a due sense of his responsibility without tempting him to travel out of his province. On the other hand, that part of the course which related to the natural history, the commercial details, and chemical characters of the *Materia Medica*, was dwelt upon at greater length in a manner calculated to make an impression on the memory. *Materia Medica*, apart from its practical application—therapeutics—is a heavy subject, which seldom excites much interest in the mind of the student, and is generally unpopular in the medical schools; but Dr. Pereira had a peculiar tact and skill in description and illustration which invested it with a new character. From the pages of Dioscorides and Galen to the purlieu of the London Docks nothing escaped him. He would take no statement on trust if he could by possibility obtain evidence; no sample of a new or important drug, received at second or third hand, would satisfy him if he could obtain it direct from the importer, see the original package, and draw a sample himself. This was not always sufficient, for if any doubt existed as to its origin or natural history, he would not rest until he had traced the importation to its source. He had an extensive correspondence of this kind, and frequently received from correspondents in remote parts of the world interesting specimens serving to identify the genera and species of vegetable products previously involved in mystery. In these researches he was assisted by his continental friends M. Guibourt, Dr. Martius, Dr. Julius Martiny, and others, who, in turn, continually referred to him for the benefit of his experience and co-operation. The microscope was his constant companion

during his examination of the products or substances which came under his notice, and he examined with equal care and accuracy their structure, chemical constitution and properties, botanical characters and physiological effects. Whatever subject was before him he threw his whole mind into it, and carefully noted down his observations and the facts which he established, with the authorities consulted, the sources of information, and other particulars.

In this manner Dr. Pereira accumulated a mass of practical knowledge, which he methodically arranged and preserved, so that it was at all times available when required. Those who were in the habit of applying to him for information on subjects relating to *Materia Medica* were seldom disappointed, for if he had not the answer ready at the moment, he could almost always find a clue to it; he would take down two or three books in his library, and in a few minutes give the references chapter and verse to all that had been published on the subject. He was at all times ready to render such assistance to his friends when applied to, and, notwithstanding the pressure of his own engagements, he never appeared annoyed or impatient at the interruption. On the contrary, it seemed to be a source of gratification to him to encourage others in the pursuit of knowledge, and to inoculate them with a portion of the enthusiasm which animated himself. He was always glad to enlist fresh votaries in the cause, and to have as many investigations as possible going on simultaneously, in furtherance of which he would furnish valuable suggestions as to the mode of proceeding, and assistance in the application and arrangement of the result. No one could enjoy the privilege of associating with Dr. Pereira without feeling increased interest in these investigations, or attend his lectures without being conscious that he had introduced a new era in the branch of science which he taught. He occasionally enlivened his lectures with pithy and appropriate anecdotes, and always had a profusion of diagrams and other accessory illustrations to elucidate his subject and assist the memory. He was always ready to give further information or explanation to any student who might desire it at the close of the lecture, and took great interest in the advancement of those who were industriously disposed. In his published works he was no less distinguished for the perspicuity and minuteness of his descriptions, the number of his illustrations, and his scrupulous accuracy. Whatever he stated as a fact, might be taken for granted; and when he made statements on other grounds than his own personal knowledge, he quoted the authority. Some authors contend, that whatever has been published is public property, and that paste and scissors may be resorted to without acknowledgment; but Dr. Pereira was scrupulous in giving credit where it was due. He never gave any indication of those feelings of jealousy which unfortunately prevail too often among literary and scientific men; and although other authors sometimes affiliated and transferred to their own works the results of his laborious investigations without making reference to the authority, we have heard him allude to the circumstance with a smile, but he did not condescend to make any complaint, or to relax in his usual courtesy and friendship towards the parties who had used this freedom.

At one period of his career Dr. Pereira devoted himself chiefly to literary pursuits and his duties as professor. He had three courses of lectures in progress at the same time, and generally delivered two, sometimes three, lectures in a day. About the time of his election as Assistant-Physician to the London Hospital, his increasing practice induced him to look forward to a relaxation in his other occupations. On this account it was not without some hesitation that he accepted the office of Professor to the Pharmaceutical Society; but his desire to promote an undertaking which he considered of great importance to the Pharmaceutical body, and also to the profession in general, prevailed over other considerations, and he continued to deliver the lectures on *Materia Medica* at Bloomsbury Square until the session of 1851-2. In 1844 he re-

signed part of his course of lectures on Chemistry at the London Hospital to Dr. Letheby, and in 1846 he relinquished it altogether. In 1851 the Apothecaries' Company introduced some new regulations, making the lectures on *Materia Medica* a summer course, much to the inconvenience of the professors in the Medical Schools. He therefore relinquished his office as professor of *Materia Medica* at the hospital, continuing only the course of lectures at the Pharmaceutical Society.

In the year 1845 Dr. Pereira was elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians; and almost immediately afterwards he became a member of the Pharmacopœia Committee of the College, to which we have reason to believe he rendered important service. He was subsequently appointed Curator of the Museum, which office he held at the time of his decease. In this capacity he discovered, among the archives of the College which were under his care, some curious and interesting manuscripts relating to *Materia Medica*, which had been buried there for many years, and portions of which he was engaged in revising with a view to publication in the event of permission being granted by the College.

When Dr. Pereira resigned his office as Professor of *Materia Medica* at the London Hospital, he transferred the most important specimens of his museum (nearly 500 in number) to Bloomsbury Square, where he was at that time lecturing. These specimens, which afterwards became the property of the Pharmaceutical Society, were particularly valuable on account of the circumstances under which they had been obtained, many of them having been derived from original sources, which identified and authenticated them, others had some history attached to them, and a considerable number are the specimens figured in his *Elements of Materia Medica*. Although he had parted with his museum he had not ceased to prosecute his researches, and fresh acquisitions continued to come in from foreign correspondents, or other sources, in the course of his investigations. A short time before his decease he built a room for the reception of his specimens, and had filled several cabinets, the contents of which were in process of arrangement when the unfortunate accident occurred which brought his scientific labours to a close. He had been examining a substance imported under the name of isinglass (figured in the *Pharmaceutical Journal* for January last, page 343), and with his usual activity was about to explore the contents of the Hunterian Museum, with a view of identifying the species of fish from which it was derived. On descending a staircase leading to the museum he fell and ruptured the rectus femoris muscles of both legs. During his confinement to his bed he did not cease from his labours, but continued to correspond, and received visitors on scientific business. He was apparently recovering from the effects of the fall, and had for some days been well enough to be wheeled in an easy chair into an adjoining room, when the sudden attack occurred which terminated his life in about twenty minutes. It is supposed that the fall occasioned some internal injury which led to the fatal result. He had previously been subject to occasional attacks of palpitation of the heart, which, however, were not such as to excite alarm, although it is not improbable that a predisposition to organic lesion existed, which was accelerated by the concussion.

Among the original papers by Dr. Pereira which have appeared during his connection with the Pharmaceutical Society, we may enumerate the following, some of which were read at meetings of the Society, and others published among the original articles in the *Pharmaceutical Journal* :—

Varieties of *Hyoscyamus*; The Fruits of Hemlock, Anise, and Fools' Parsley; The Ceylon Cardamom; Grains of Paradise; Chinese Galls; Summer Plant Winter-Worm (a Chinese medicine); Potato Starch; On the Formation of Scientific Committees for the Advancement of Pharmacology; The Adulteration of Scammony; Some rare kinds of Rhubarb; Samovy Isinglass; The Circular Polarization of several Terabinthinat Substances; Chloride of Formyle, or Terchloride of Car-

bon ; Banbury Rhubarb ; Alcornouque Bark ; The Fruit of Amomum Meleguette ; The Cardamom of Abyssinia ; Microscopic Vegetations developed in Pharmaceutical Liquids (four papers) ; Notices of several Drugs from St. Petersburg ; The light and heavy Varieties of Carbonated and Calcined Magnesia ; Prepared Chalk and precipitated Carbonate of Lime (two) ; Liquor Acidi Arseniosi Hydrochlorici ; Cod-Liver Oil ; The Colouring Matter of Dutch Cake Litmus (two) ; The Commercial Varieties of Ginger ; The Commercial Varieties of Turmeric ; Amomum Citratum, an undescribed Cardamom ; The Alcohol Test for the Purity of Castor and Croton Oils ; Kosso ; Hyraceum ; Myrospermum Pubescens, Myrospermum of Sonsonate ; Nag-Kasar ; Calysaccium Longifolium ; Kokum Butter ; The presence of Hydruret of Salicyle in Aqua Castorei ; Black Balsam of Peru ; Mishmee Bitter, or Coptis Teeta ; Decomposition of Chloroform ; Socotrine Aloe Juice, &c.

In addition to the above he contributed to this Journal many articles, and notes to others, which by his desire were inserted without acknowledgment. He revised the more important scientific papers, and was at all times ready to give his advice and assistance, the value of which could not be too highly estimated. It appeared to be his desire to keep as much as possible in the background, while he voluntarily performed a considerable share of work for which he took no credit, and often gave for publication notices on various subjects prepared for a future edition of his work on *Materia Medica*, in which he afterwards published them as quotations from the *Pharmaceutical Journal*. It was only in compliance with his request that we have hitherto abstained from acknowledging these obligations ; but it is right that the fact should be known, as his lamented decease has removed the restraint, and enabled us to do justice to the kindness and liberality of his disposition.

It will be acknowledged by all those who were acquainted with Dr. Pereira and his works, that he stood alone as the most indefatigable and pains-taking labourer, and the highest authority, in the department of science in which he chiefly distinguished himself. He loved science for its own sake, and the stimulus which animated him was not so much the acquisition of fame, as the pleasure he derived from the investigation of scientific phenomena, and the establishment of truth. He was no less devoted to Chemistry than *Materia Medica*. At the same time he did not allow these pursuits to interfere with his duties at the London Hospital, and his other professional engagements, and he had an extensive practice as a Physician, which was rapidly increasing at the time of his decease.