

An address delivered to the Hunterian Society / by Thomas Mee Daldy, the appointed orator for the year 1853.

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AN ADDRESS

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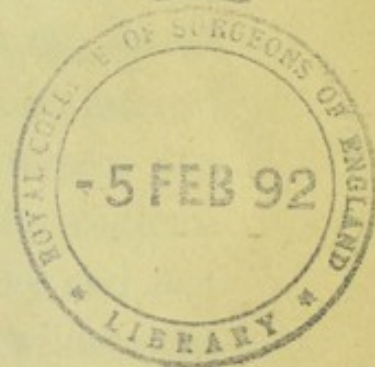
THE HUNTERIAN SOCIETY,

BY

THOMAS MEE DALDY,

THE APPOINTED ORATOR FOR THE YEAR 1853.

Printed at the Request of the Council of the Society.



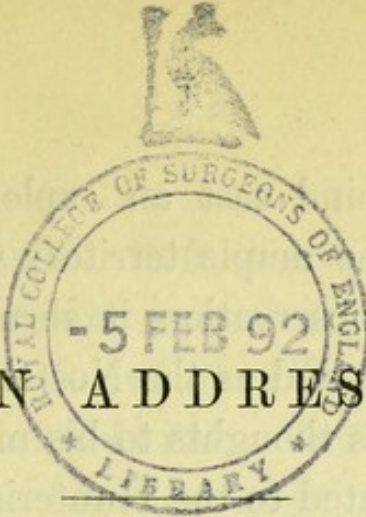
LONDON :

RICHARD CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD STREET HILL.

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A circular purple ink stamp from the Royal College of Surgeons of England Library. The outer ring contains the text "ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND" at the top and "LIBRARY" at the bottom, separated by two small stars. In the center of the stamp, the date "- 5 FEB 92" is stamped.

AN ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN,—Although, in obedience to that duty which I conceive that every man owes to his own profession, I have not shrunk from the task appointed to me on this occasion, I am far from being insensible to its importance and responsibilities. I had deluded myself into the belief that, from my first difficulty—the selection of a subject on which to found my address—I should readily find a refuge in the circumstance that the Council of the Society had restricted me within no narrow limits, but had given me free range within that boundary which skirts the comprehensive field of what has been denominated “medicine.” This latitude, at first sight, appeared to me well calculated to relieve the anxiety which a member, thus deputed, must naturally feel to arrest the attention of his auditors and keep alive their interest during the allotted hour. Little did I foresee the embarrassment which was to arise from the contemplation of that varied growth of philosophy and fact of which medicine is made up, or the bewilderment to accrue from the attempt to select from even that limited portion of its products, with which my own experience was familiar, one adapted to my purpose.

Each time my mind cast an exploring glance over that section of the ample territory which was within the range of its observation, it shrunk back again to its starting point; and as the Nostalgia of the Swiss peasant tethers his thoughts to his mountain-home, so mine seemed rivetted to the Hunterian Society. Nor does it appear to me inappropriate that we should take this opportunity of considering, under that title, two questions of which the name is suggestive: the first, Are we, as the constituted guardians of legitimate medicine, zealously co-operating for its advancement? and the second, Is the mode of co-operation which we adopt, that best calculated to effect its progress?

The answer to the first question is readily to be found in our periodically assembling—after the harassing and anxious cares of an active professional day—here, to weigh, in friendly intercourse, those grave facts which our daily experience is accumulating, and to gauge their relation to the standard of truth; here to impart the suggestions arising out of those facts which are constantly occurring to the mind of the professional man who is earnestly following out his vocation, and which would be otherwise lost to his profession, and in all probability, from lack of fixedness, even to himself; here, to cast into the treasury of medical knowledge what each has to give, and carry away with us the fruits of others' contributions, to be pondered and digested in the quietude of the study.

The second question is not so easily to be disposed of. If it were possible to furnish a concise answer to the interrogation arising out of it,—“What is medicine as a branch of knowledge?”—it would admit of an equally concise solution. But how are we to define medicine? Shall we call it a science? In an able oration, delivered by one of our most learned members* some five years since, I think it was distinctly proved that medicine is certainly not a science, in the restricted sense of the word, as implying an exact system of causation. In many parts of it we know the palpable proximate cause and the effect; but, as in the experiment with the billiard-balls, we know that the first is struck, and that the last moves without any perceptible movement of the intermediate ones; so in medicine, of what takes place between cause and effect we are too frequently in ignorance.

Are we, then, to designate that species of learning which requires, in a large number of instances, an extended inductive sequence to arrive at its facts, and a further induction to work out its etiology, an art? Art is the larval stage of every science,—through that stage medicine has passed: and although we cannot represent it as an Imago, it has certainly advanced to the extreme verge of its pupal life; and, indeed, already presents many lineaments which stamp it as the insect Science, if not perfect in all its parts.

The difficulty appears to me to arise from our having to deal with a study, whose position in the

* Dr. Barlow.

scale of philosophical inquiry is too undecided to admit of definition; and that the only description of it is to be derived from a brief inquiry into the mode in which it has been cultivated by our predecessors and contemporaries: and from this review, the answer to my second question, "is the mode of co-operation which we adopt, that best calculated to effect its progress?" must be furnished.

When the infirmities of flesh, the many pangs and sufferings it endured, first led man to contemplate his fellow-man as matter tending always to decay, and ponder o'er his ailments and their cure, with what amazement must he have surveyed this most complex of all created things! With little less than awe must he have viewed this marvellous whole,—combining all the attributes of brutes with mind and spirit, and yet its parts so knit and blended, so diverse, still compact, as that he could but look on its entirety. He could not separate the organic life, the instinctive gift, the reasoning mind, the immortal soul. Nor could he solve the wondrous problems he beheld of motion in its varied forms:—solids and fluids obedient to its laws,—of sense administering food to reason,—of sustenance and growth,—of waste and death,—and ruling over all some power unseen, inscrutable. Well might he have exclaimed with Young,

"How reason reels!—

Oh, what a miracle to man is man!"

Whence could he draw the facts on which to base his notions of disease? He could but watch the errors

which occurred in this mysterious fabric; note how they happened, how they were restored, or how they led to death, and after death examine the remains of what was man. And this he did. 'Tis thus the earliest records of our art teach us that it arose.

This infant stage of medicine occurred to the Egyptians, Jews, Assyrians; but in Greece we first can trace the recorded signs, the progress and result of morbid life. Here, in the history of the Asclepiæ, we find the first attempt to systematise the facts observed, and range them into line, to form the connected narrative of medicine. Here the Asclepiadæ pursued the natural history of disease,—here, through the votive tablets, carefully preserved, and the traditional lore, conveyed from sire to son, they accumulated data, which were to become the basis of our most noble art,—here was well exemplified the necessity, which men in the early stages of society must have felt, of ascertaining the properties of vegetable productions, and hence the germ of dietetic and therapeutic knowledge formed,—here the first steps in hygienic science taken, and here the apparent good or ill effect of each remedial means accurately recorded in the history of the case.

Thus were created the materials on which the gifted mind of that archetype of medical excellence, the great Hippocrates, was to be exerted. The traditional knowledge of eighteen generations of his own family; the accumulated documents, not only of the Temple of Cos, but, in, all probability, of the other

Asclepia which he had visited, were spread before him ; and he seemed to be endowed with the wonderful sagacity necessary to elicit from them the foundation on which was to be reared that extensive and complicated fabric which bears the name of Medicine, used in its comprehensive sense. How, then, did he pursue his arduous task ? With an intuitive perception of those truths which were so many centuries afterwards inculcated by our own illustrious Bacon, he severed all extraneous matter from the object of his pursuit, and taking rational experience for his guide, read Nature's book with all that honest truthfulness which proved the secret of his success. He found a system of so called philosophy mixed up with medicine, which, for lack of those credentials that true science carries with it, did not approve itself to his observant mind,—and he rejected it at once. How ardently must he have longed, as thousands have done since, for some theory, founded on Nature, which should bind the scattered facts already strewn in his path ! How must he have striven against that tempting fallacy, which besets the medical mind more than any other, to bind together discordant objects, rather than see them wastefully scattered and disjointed ! But his nice perception of the true taught him that man's knowledge is of slow growth,—from small beginnings,—and that the aphoristic reflection of Pope on love,—

“ God loves from whole to parts ; but human soul
Must rise from individual to the whole—”

is strictly applicable to the progress of learning. Hippocrates seems to have perceived that facts are the materials of science, and that, as Dr. Whewell says, "the process of scientific discovery is cautious and rigorous, not by abstaining from hypotheses, but by rigorously comparing hypotheses with facts, and resolutely rejecting all that the comparison does not confirm."

With these views he made the natural history of disease the constant object of his study; laying the greatest stress on the careful narration of cases, watching the effects of his applications, and proceeding by a cautious analogy from individual facts to general conclusions; and with a mind set with all that ardour which seems so especially the handmaid of genius to the pursuit of his art, few things patent to the senses or the inquiring intellect escaped his precise observation. The minute details of illness, the effects of diet, of temperature, of bodily predisposition, of critical evacuation, epidemic disposition of the atmosphere, and the myriad other data which contributed to the great store of facts which he was creating, are glorious witnesses to that patient industry, that untiring research, and that truthful pursuit of science, which made him, and which have alone in any age made any medical man great.

He formed hypotheses, it is true,—for who can think on subjects so abstruse without forming hypotheses? (the two acts appear almost inseparable,) but they

were chiefly hypotheses based upon facts, derived first from common observation, then from scientific observation, and sometimes from experiment, so that they became tentative hypotheses, which, in the progress of science, have so often proved the stepping-stone to legitimate induction. The blood, the phlegm, the bile and atrabile, were facts of common observation; their association with certain temperaments was a fact derived from scientific observation, and the hypothesis formed on their excess or deficiency was a warranted attempt to arrive at a principle. But even when he had formed hypotheses, so dangerous did he feel the ground on which he stood, that he guardedly abstained from acting on them, and strenuously impressed their insecurity on others.

The crowning excellence, however, of Hippocrates' method of pursuing his science is the intuitive perception and careful avoidance of the error, so well denounced by Bacon; viz. "the over-early and peremptory reduction of knowledge into arts and methods, from which commonly science receives small or no augmentation." "But," he adds, "as young men, when they knit and shape perfectly, do seldom grow to a further stature, so knowledge, while it is in aphorisms and observations, is in growth; but when it is comprehended in exact methods, it may, perchance, be further polished, and illustrated, and accommodated for use and practice, but it increaseth no more in bulk and substance." He felt the insuf-

ficiency of his materials for the formation of general principles, and wisely contented himself with reducing his observations to the aphoristic form.

I have dwelt thus at length on the mode of medical culture adopted by this properly-called philosopher, because I believe it will be found that the reputation of his successors through all ages, as cultivators of practical medicine, bears an exact ratio to their adherence to the method which he had devised; and that every generation, and every individual, must make the facts of disease their own by the same honest observation and association, of which he has set them so brilliant an example.

For instance, Praxagoras of Cos would possibly never have been known to us as a medical author, even in spite of his general reputation amongst his contemporaries, but that he was the first to observe that the pulse was a measure of the force of disease, and the first to lay open the abdomen in intro-susception. In the Alexandrian school, independently of his character and general acquirements, the name of Herophilus is especially associated with the minute attention which he had paid to the varieties of the pulse. The fame of Aretæus depended not so much on his pneumatic doctrines, as on the additions which he made to practical medicine, by following the Hippocratean method of observation.

The accomplished and literary Celsus pursued the same system of watching the operations of Nature, and especially applauds Hippocrates for his severance

of philosophy from medicine ; because, he says, speaking of the empirical and dogmatic sects, “ medicines and cures were first found out, and then, after, the reasons and causes were discoursed ; and not the causes first found out, and by light from them the medicines and cures discovered.”

And the name of the learned and refined Galen, has been perpetuated more by his diligence in acquiring experience, his accuracy of observation, and his classification of the temperaments, than by his ingenious and subtle endeavours to force into premature growth, theories of which the seeds were then scarcely germinating.

The same remarks will apply to the Arabian period : the names of the physicians of the Saracenic school, Rhazes, Avicenna, Albucasis, Avenzoar, Averroës, are preserved to us chiefly by their descriptions of diseases, which then occurred for the first time, or had not been noticed before, as small-pox, measles, the distinction between sympathetic and essential fever, or their observations on the effects of individual remedies, rather than for any advancement in the progress of medicine from its state of art to its more scientific form.

It must not, however, be supposed that during this period, the irrepressible longing of the human mind in pursuit of science, for some cementing principle which should bind together collected facts, was in abeyance. The idea of life, a fixed and certain principle of Biology, was the bond most sedulously sought for, but in vain, because, according to the then pre-

valent method of philosophizing, it was attempted to lay down a universal proposition, which should embrace all the facts of life, and consequently, of disease. The elements formed the extreme boundary of existing knowledge, and in them was therefore sought the principle of life. Miletus asserted that stones, wood, and vegetable productions of every kind, were merely modifications of water; Pythagoras, that the one element was fire; Anaximenes, air; Lymphenes, earth; and Empedocles formed from all these the doctrine of the four elements. It was then reasoned that if such were the structure of all forms of matter, it must be also of the human body; that the human body must be composed of the four elements, involving the idea that the elements bestowed upon the whole qualities resembling their own. Plato, adopting the doctrine of the four elements, went a step further, and said that they must exist in the form of atoms, and pores in which these atoms could move; and, moreover, that these atoms were attracted towards each other by friendship, and repelled by hate,—the original doctrine of attraction and repulsion. Upon this doctrine of the elements, the first medical theory was established by Hippocrates; he supposed that these elements formed the four humours to which I have before alluded, and that the proximate cause of disease consisted in the disproportion of these humours; but he had the sagacity to add, “this may be true or not, it shall not influence my practice.”

I will not weary you with a recital of the various

attempts to form a theory of life—the plunge of the Methodists into the Brunonian theory of our own time, in order to escape from the mistiness of the Humorist and the Platonist; or the overlaying of the doctrine of the elements by the Pneumatists, with the notion that a certain air or spirit entered the lungs, passed from the lungs into the heart, and thence into the arteries; and that when this air was disturbed it produced disease: for instance, when it got into the head it produced vertigo, or into the cavity of the chest, pleurisy. But I might, if I had the time, prove from the data of the present day, that Aristotle, in his labours on Comparative Anatomy and Natural History, laid the true foundation for the cultivation of Biology through Physiology, but lost the fruits which might have resulted from his valuable facts and observations, by the refinement of his metaphysical speculations.

It were better, however, to dismiss these baseless hypotheses, with another quotation from the wise Bacon, who says, “For as Aristotle saith that children at first will call all women ‘mother,’ but after they come to distinguish according to truth; so experience, if it be in childhood, will call every philosophy ‘mother,’ but when it cometh to ripeness, it will discern the true mother.” This ripeness, however, was reserved to a period remote from that of which we are now speaking.

Thus it would seem that up to this time the cultivation of medicine, consisted in the patiently remarking and grouping under a certain nosological arrange-

ment, the phenomena which the body presented in its various morbid conditions, the effects of vegetable productions upon it in health and disease, and the results which the then known hygienic influences operated, with such coarser portions of anatomy and physiology as the existing prejudices and modes of inquiry permitted.

After the dismal period which now ensued—that long “dark day of nothingness” presented by the middle ages, in which the fruit of the science of former generations seemed imbedded in the loam of sloth, there to germinate and elaborate the elements of that bright plant, whose leaves and flowers, and, in so many instances, whose fruits, have since been slow revealed to later generations,—after this period of almost decay and revivification, medicine was destined to pass through a second though brief stage of infancy.

On its revival, shielding itself under the parental guidance of its newly recognised progenitors, the authority of Hippocrates and Galen became the chief corner-stone of its professors' faith. But that impatience of mere authority, which expanding reason engenders, burst asunder the trammels which the judgment could not approve. To the doctrine, “oportet discentem credere,” was added the position, “oportet edoctum judicare,” and the medical mind was emancipated from the tyranny of dogmata, to gambol for a time on the broad plain of imagination and enterprise, soon, however, to be recalled to the grave and sober region of fact.

The first step towards laying a stable foundation for scientific medicine was to gather together the facts of anatomy. How slowly this was effected is evidenced by the circumstance, that an anatomical description of the human body, drawn from nature, and published by Mondini, of the University of Bologna, about the year 1315, was the text-book of the most learned universities of Italy during a period of nearly three hundred years. It, nevertheless, stimulated the labours of others in the same direction, until a new impetus was given to this branch of study by Vesalius, in the middle of the fifteenth century, leading, through the exertions of Fallopius, Eustachius and their successors, to the accumulation of anatomical data, sufficiently numerous and correlative to admit of their being reasoned on, and thus to prepare the groundwork of that now all-important science, a deductive physiology.

The great first-fruits to true science resulting from these researches was the valuable and glorious discovery of the circulation of the blood by our own illustrious countryman,—the discovery from which must date the first pretension of medicine to rank itself amongst the sciences. With the light shed upon his pursuit by this important principle,—in addition to the recognition of the absorbent system by Aselli and Bartholiné, and of the structure and function of the lungs, by Malpighi and his coadjutors,—the physician could no longer resist an inquiry into the causes of the phenomena which his clinical experience was daily presenting to him.

And I would here impress upon you the main argument of my address; namely, that on careful examination I think it will appear that the progress, both of the sciences ancillary to medicine and of medicine itself, when divested of all the tossings and heavings of those billows which the undisciplined mind of man raises up in the path of his search after truth, has been ultimately effected by a steady adherence to the method of first collecting the necessary facts, grouping those facts according to their perceptible correlativeness, then colligating them by the aid of an appropriate conception, and thence deducing a principle. Thus the slowly collected facts of anatomy, when Harvey had once made his own, furnished him with the means of first grouping that portion of them which related to the blood-vessels; then of colligating them by means of a preconceived and appropriate idea, suggested by his sagacity; and of ultimately deducing the principle of the circulation. Here we trace the first solid foundation of that paramountly important science, conventionally termed Physiology, of which the broad basis was afterwards laid by that great man whose honoured name we assume,—a basis on which so splendid an edifice has been erected, mainly by the labours of the gentleman * on whom his mantle has so gracefully descended, and whom we are proud to rank amongst our honorary members. Step by step has each of those general laws, which now form the firm connecting links

* Professor Ower.

between the phenomena of life, and therefore of disease, been eliminated, by a steady procedure from that which is known to that which is unknown, piling, as it were, syllogism upon syllogism, and thus each separate part of the building is being completed in itself, preparatory to that general design which we hope may one day be vouchsafed, to enable us to consolidate the whole,—at least, that portion of it on this side the limits of the psychological part of our nature.

This, at any rate, is the philosophical mode of arriving at such an idea of life,—such a consistent biology, as shall enable us to string together the phenomena of life and the manifestations of disease, which we are daily called upon to observe.

The state of art in which Chemistry, the next great agent in the progress of medicine, so long remained, is traceable to a very remote period; and in later times the alchemists accumulated a large number of valuable and isolated facts, but, with few exceptions, they neglected their useful and obvious applications, and wasted their labours on chimerical and unattainable objects. But a period was to come when Basil Valentine should lay the foundation-stone of chemical science, by associating certain facts and deducing results from them; he was thus, apparently, led to the discovery of sulphuric and nitric acids, as well as some of the salts of antimony. By further stages of this process of correct reasoning have been gradually elicited the existence of the gaseous bodies, by Van Helmont; the principle of

chemical affinity, by Mayow (developed afterwards by Boërhaave); latent heat, leading to such important results, by Black; and the fixed laws, which have raised chemistry from an art to the highest ranks of science.

The general laws of these two sciences, aided by those of natural philosophy, are the chief means by which medicine has become invested with the garb of science, to which in many of its parts it is so justly entitled, but which as a whole it cannot fairly assume. For example, let us test its title, by the examination of one of its leading doctrines, that of inflammation. We find it proceeding from the mere naming of the palpable phenomena attending it: the rubor, calor, dolor, tumor, through various steps, which time will not allow me now to trace, to the long-continued controversy of increased or diminished capillary action—a controversy on which volumes were written and years of labour expended. Next the microscope widened the field of observation, and thus imported into it new facts, which afforded a fresh starting point for the construction of a theory, or the indulgence of a speculation. The phenomena now brought into view, are thus expressed by our respected honorary member, Mr. Travers: “We have familiar opportunities of witnessing the aggregation of the blood corpuscles to actual stasis, and the partial remora of the circulation by their cumulation in glomera, in transparent parts subjected to irritation.” Here we have a deeper insight into the recondite processes of

morbid action, but we make no advance towards a cause from whence this stasis arises. Let us dive still deeper into this secret laboratory of Nature, and, adopting the interesting views of Professor Draper, discover a more remote source of capillary circulation in health, and consequently a more remote stage of the phenomena exhibited under the condition which we are considering.

The physical law, as evidenced in inorganic bodies, that if two liquids communicate with each other through a capillary tube, for the walls of which they each possess an affinity, and the affinity be stronger in the one liquid than in the other, a movement will ensue; the liquid having the greater affinity being attracted into the tube, and driving the other before it. From this law he deduces one source of the capillary circulation. The affinity in the capillary circulation, he asserts, is derived from the relative necessities of the tissue through which the blood is passing, and the constituents of the blood itself. If the blood circulating in the systemic capillaries contain oxygen, with which it is ready to part, and the tissues which the vessels permeate are prepared to give up carbonic acid to it, there will be an affinity between the blood corpuscle within the capillary and the cell without it, containing the carbonic acid, by which they will be attracted to each other; and, the interchange having been effected by endosmosis, the blood thus rendered venous, having lost its attractive force, will be driven forward by the blood which still pos-

sesses it, entering the capillary. And the reverse of this will of course occur in the pulmonary capillaries; the venous blood and the air in the pulmonary cells have a mutual attraction, which is satisfied by the exchange that takes place through the walls of the capillary; and the arterialized blood having no longer any attraction for the air, will be driven forward by the venous blood which still retains its affinity.

Let us assume, then, that the arrest of this nutritive process, is the first phenomenon of inflammation, and what have we gained? Let this be proved to demonstration, and we have only added a few new facts to those previously collected; we are no nearer to a cause,—we still fall back upon a vague and ill-defined notion of vitality, and say that a diminished vitality is the cause; or, to put it still more vaguely, that an error of nutrition is the foundation upon which a theory of inflammation is to be based. True science will, certainly, not admit of a theory so flimsily constructed; and if one of the chief arches upon which scientific medicine has been raised be so abruptly cut from under it, we may fairly anticipate the tottering of a large portion of the structure erected thereon, from the lack of that solid substratum which science demands.

Allow me here to guard myself against the supposition that, by speaking of medicine as not strictly science, I would imply anything approaching to its degradation in the scale of philosophical inquiry. A study more noble in its objects, or on which a

greater amount of labour and intelligence — and, I may add, attended with the happiest results— has been bestowed, can scarcely be imagined. My object is to prevent such retardation of it, as has frequently occurred to other parts of knowledge, by the over-early reduction to rules and systems of which I have above spoken. I consider that even the terms, “science of medicine,” “theory of inflammation,” “theory of fever,” in common use, tend, by implying fixed and definite laws which shall be exact under all circumstances, to damp that inquiring ardour which is so essential to its farther progress, because the implication serves to generate reliance on a foundation which the inquirer must discover in the end to be insecure.

Were the difficulties in the formation of the principles which we so much desire, dependant upon the laborious exertions of vigorous and practised intellect, long since would they have become standard truths, by which medicine might be now taught and learned, as chemistry or any other science ; for, I think, that there are few studies to which a higher degree of energetic and forcible mind have been devoted.

But the truth is, that the difficulties are inherent in the subject itself. The base, necessary to support the shaft and capital of the column which we would erect, must be formed of materials more than adamantine in their composition,—they must be the hard facts of vitality, which now appear so far beyond our reach, and of which we can only scan the cis-psychological

portion (if I may be allowed the expression) : the collection of the materials for the formation of its shaft, has occupied all generations and must still occupy us ; and the more than Corinthian capital with which we would adorn it, the discovery of a specific for every disease, is beyond what man can expect, until the approach of that period when disease and death shall disappear from the world.

To examine more in detail these difficulties of which we are speaking, let us take from chemistry a comparative illustration of the facilities which it affords for the formation of a connected sequence. Chemistry can, even from an imaginary starting point, build up a sequence of combinations ; or by a retrograde sequence arrive at an imaginary base,—and the sequence under all circumstances will remain the same. Let Ethyle or Formyle (things never yet seen) be proved to be no longer Ethyle or Formyle, or to be further decomposable, still the ter-chloride of Formyle would remain the ter-chloride of what was Formyle ; the sequence between the base and the tertiary combination would be the same. And so with Ethyle, the Ethyle series would not be disturbed. On the other hand : in medicine, should a professor, from the frequency of its occurrence under certain conditions, construct a theory of fever upon a form of inflammation of the gastro-intestinal membrane, or inflammation of the brain, and make all the subsequent phenomena flow therefrom,—if one single case should occur in which the fact from which he started is

absent, the whole fabric, as a reference to medical records will show, utterly crumbles away, and not a vestige of it remains: what he thought rock, proved but sand, and such a foundation could not withstand the rough waves of the great ocean of truth.

If this be so, it follows that a large portion of medicine must still be studied—as Hippocrates, Galen, Sydenham, Heberden, Huxham, Abercrombie, and other men of the highest order of intellect, have studied it,—by the sedulous observation of the living and the dead, and by weaving together the collected data with the threads which the collateral sciences of the time appropriately supplied, carefully selecting those threads only which would bear the strain of that force by which experience would test them.

And now I think I am prepared to answer my second question, by saying that we do adopt the mode of co-operation best calculated to effect the progress of our knowledge; for we especially invite the clinical facts and observations of our members: when presented, we sift them, with all that kindly criticism for which this Society has ever been remarkable, to try whether they be facts or no: we test the links borrowed from the other sciences, by which they are strung together, whether they be exempt from flaw; we then group them, according to the nosology which our present imperfect knowledge compels us to adopt, and commit them to our archives, in the hope that they will bear abundant fruit in the future. What more will co-operation effect? Our

collective labour is directed to the bringing together of the materials for the building,—each member carries away with him such portions of these materials as are necessary to the master-mason, in the construction of that section of the vast pile to which his energies are specially directed; but all must be subsidiary to, and in anticipation of, the arrival of the architect,—the Newton of medicine,—who will furnish a design by which the whole shall be consolidated and perfected.

There is another step in the path of progress which I would avail myself of this occasion (and I hope not inopportunately, as I know no other), to suggest to the attention of the Society. We have now accumulated in our library the unpublished records of our transactions for thirty-four years, carefully arranged and easy of reference. We have also amongst us many members sufficiently ardent in the pursuit of truth to feel that any labour, which clearly promised to advance it, would be a labour of delight and satisfaction: and it seems to me that if these gentlemen could be induced severally to epitomize from these records the prominent data of the more important diseases, and present each in a summary form, at one of our ordinary meetings, they would not only be rendering a dutiful service to our body, but—by the permission and at the expense of a Council which has always evinced the utmost readiness to promote by every means the success of medical learning—to our profession at large, by their publication in a combined form.

Thus shall we vindicate our zeal for the advancement of medicine, and the well-being of humanity; thus, by a close adherence to the strict and well-defined paths of true science, shall we vindicate ourselves to the world, against those pretenders who, from deceptious motives or in ignorance, assert that they have attained unto truth by the short-cuts and bye-paths of speculation; and thus may we at length hope, under all discouragements, to arrive at the point from which we may

“ Trace the close links, which form the perfect chain,
 In beautiful connexion: mark the scale,
 Whose nice gradations, with progression true
 For ever rising, end in Deity.”