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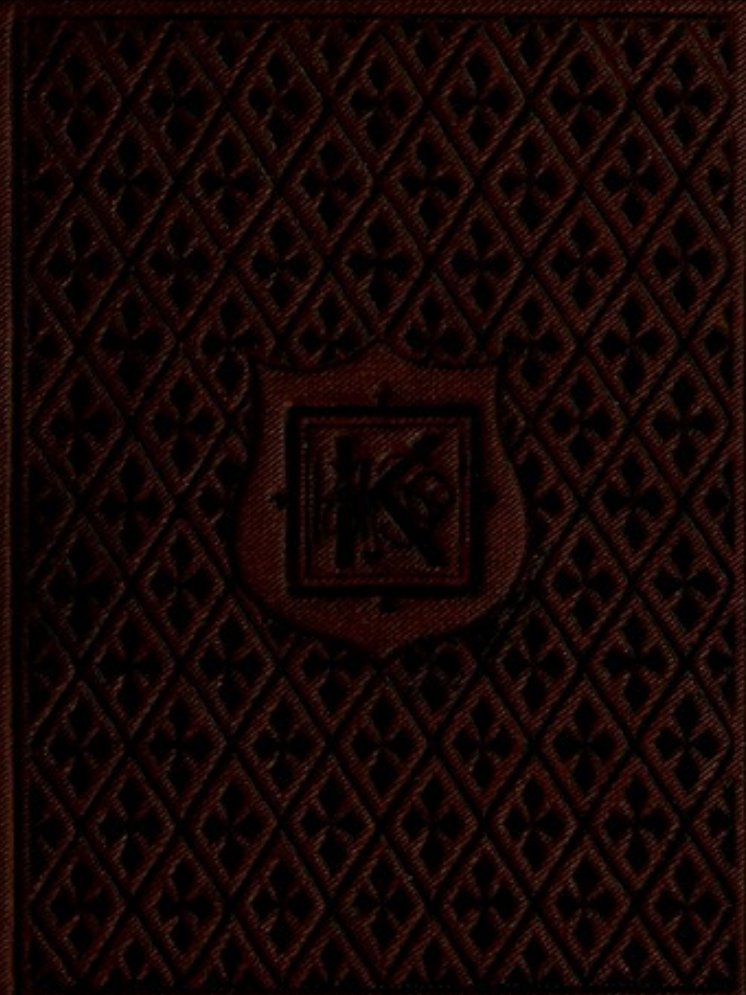
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*The Place
of the Physician*



JAMES HINTON

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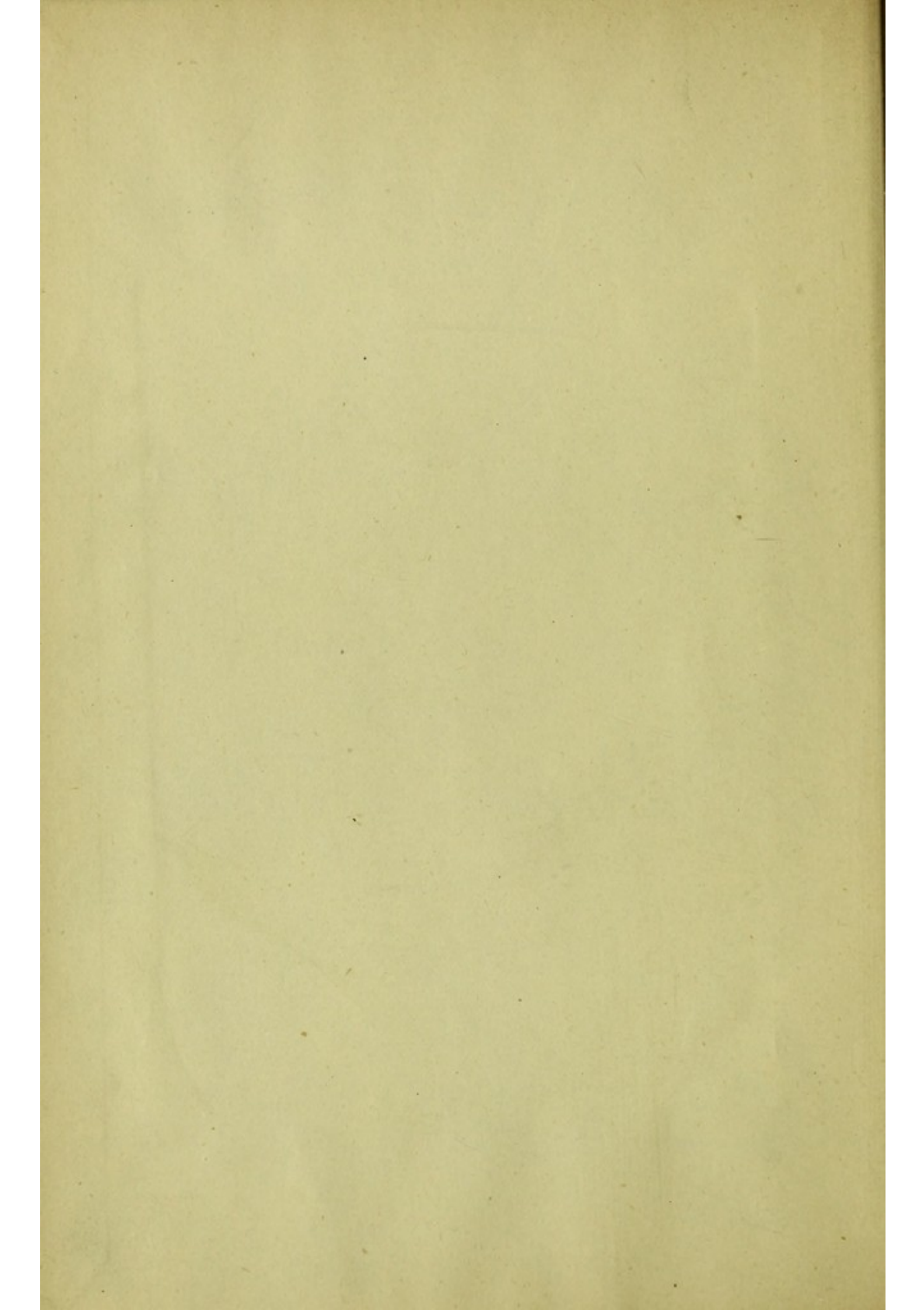
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*THE PLACE OF THE PHYSICIAN*



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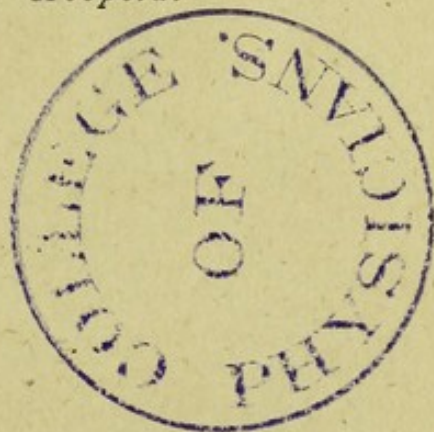
BEING THE INTRODUCTORY LECTURE AT

GUY'S HOSPITAL, OCTOBER 1873

*WITH OTHER ESSAYS*

BY JAMES HINTON

*Aural Surgeon to the Hospital*



HENRY S. KING & Co.

65 CORNHILL & 12 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

1874



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## P R E F A C E.

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ON being requested to print the Lecture I had the honour of delivering at the opening of the present Session of Guy's Hospital Medical School, I felt that it dealt with some of the subjects on which it touched in a manner so fragmentary as to demand an attempt at a fuller explanation. I have accordingly added two short Essays, which, I hope, may show that there are reasonable grounds for the views which, in the Lecture, I endeavoured briefly to enforce.

I should say, also, that, in claiming so much for the Physician, I have not meant to make



any exclusive claim for him, nor to imply that his part in human life is larger or better than that of any of his fellows. My object was to trace out, so far as I could, the position of advantage in respect to the other aspects of human thought and action, in which their own studies and experience place those whose primary duty is with the physical structure and the physical ills of man. For them, if they truly enter into their work, I have claimed that, through the necessary relations of their special knowledge to all other, they stand in the attitude of teachers to every other class of men, especially to those whose business lies with the most important spheres of human life. But if the Physician is in wide relations a teacher, assuredly he is also on every hand a learner; and to the full I believe that for every task which is imposed on men there is provided an equal reward, and that the

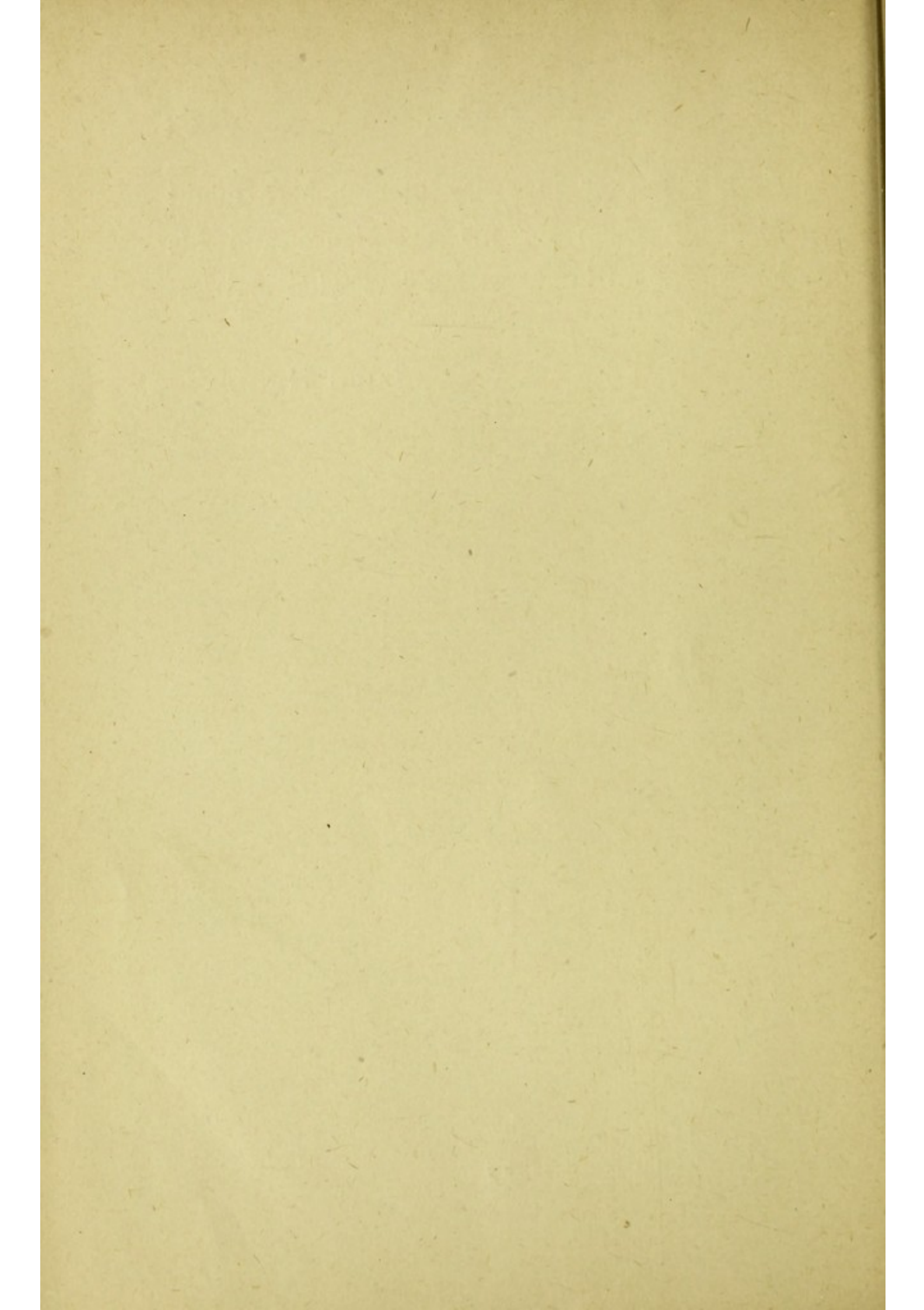
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sincere worker in every other sphere might as justly claim for his experience and his knowledge an influence not less wide and important.

JAMES HINTON.

LONDON: *December* 1873.





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## THE PLACE OF THE PHYSICIAN.

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MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,—Mine is a pleasant task. For no one who stands here to repeat the welcome with which this hospital greets, year by year, the youths who seek access to her can fail to feel profoundly at once the honour and the pleasure of his work—a pleasure, I may add, that no sense of incompetence can banish. Standing in the name of Guy's Hospital, her governors and staff, to speak, no man need regret his inability worthily to tell her story. She has better witness than any voice could supply; the witness of facts accomplished in the past and constantly repeated in the present.

Gentlemen, if your ambition lies in the peaceful path of the healer of disease, the unraveller of Nature's secrets; if the triumphs that you seek are those which are won by patient toil at the bedside of



sickness, undisdainful of the garret or the cellar if human need have made them holy—triumphs of a skill made quick by sympathy, of a sympathy made a reality by skill—it is enough to say to you that you are members even now of Guy's Hospital ; that her historic nobleness, graced by so many illustrious names, enfolds you ; that her resources, by which, when incomparably less rich than now, so many men have been trained to greatness, are at your service. And while our thoughts recall in a rapid survey the names of which Guy's Hospital is proud, assuredly they rest on none with a deeper satisfaction than on that of the physician who has so recently, to the regret of all, resigned the post he has so long adorned. Of those unwearied labours which in past years rendered the name of Owen Rees identical with all that was most profound and helpful in the application of chemistry to pathology and practice, it is not for me to speak ; it is known to all how deep is the debt which science owes to them, most heartily acknowledged as it is by those most capable of judging of their worth. How rich and deep a stream of life runs through this hospital may best be evidenced, perhaps, by the men it loses from its outward ranks, and yet lives on no less vigorous and strong. But, indeed, they are not lost, for their love is as deep as



ever ; nor would their service, if it were claimed, be less ungrudging.

But Guy's Hospital gives to you more than a past glory, a present privilege ; her honour in the future she commits also to your hands. To-day gathering to her, to receive what of instruction she has to bestow, it will not seem to you so long before you stand as the distributors of her blessings to the world. In you and by you she will live. She will be but what you will make her. Out of your ranks must come the men who shall sustain (it will be sure to be sustained) the honour of the past—nay, of the present ; worthy successors of the men to whom now your admiration is so justly given, to whom you will so rightly feel it a privilege to listen, but whom here I must not name. Even more still, by you must be sustained, and will be, that wider, deeper, and higher honour of Guy's Hospital, which depends not on the eminence and fame, however great and well deserved, of a few, but on the good and faithful work—often most skilful and splendid work, though little known or applauded—done by the men of Guy's in every land.

For it is the true glory of this hospital that it has, for generation after generation, sent out into the abodes of suffering a band of truthful, honest, and able



men, who have willingly let pass no opportunity of becoming true helpers to their fellows. She has done her part, and will do it yet again in you, in binding all the world in one electric chain of service. As you look round on one another, you are in great measure strangers now; but there is a potent magic in these walls: hence you will go forth an army of brothers, pledged that through you the weight of human sorrow shall be lightened.

There is one spectacle that the past has sometimes seen. Let us record it, lest the future be incredulous; justly incredulous; nay, indignant at the slander. For it was a creature in the shape of a man; and it bore in its right hand a diploma, obtained by pretence of study—a certificate of cunning and deceit. Forth over the earth it walked, a more malignant pestilence: disease itself endowed with will, made powerful to cheat; enriching its armoury of destruction with lies. It has said to the sick and suffering, ‘Look to me;’ and has let them perish, or guided them to a speedier grave. It has made murder its amusement, and thrust its reddened hand into the pinched pocket of the widow; shaming the thief by meaner robbery. But I am wandering from my subject. I was thinking of the times when there could be found men base enough deliberately to contemplate deceiving their



sick fellows with sham knowledge: of times when men, or things that might be mistaken for them, could come to an institution like this, where such historic memories challenged their emulation, where misery in every form of pathos appealed to their compassion, and could give to time spent in indolence or riot the name of pleasure.

Very far, indeed, I have wandered from my subject ; which is—you, gentlemen, and your studies. For you come here to a feast, and a more splendid feast was never spread before man. In its chief epitome—the human frame—all Nature spreads herself before you, and invites your gaze. As your eye scans the list of subjects you have to master, you might feel disposed to count their number a burden, and wish (without being chargeable with indolence) that your labours might be restricted to a narrower range. But it would be a fatal wish. The glory of our art is the extent of its range over almost all the sciences ; for this means that it is rooted deep in Nature, and insists on pursuing to the utmost the sources of every fact with which it has to deal.

And even now, while we meet, the bounds of medical science are enlarging. We may almost see them expanding day by day, and making tributary fresh domains of knowledge. Not only chemistry,



botany, zoology—these have been long its servants—but new domains of physics, molecular and other, of the science of electric currents, and of heat ; problems of the first dawnings of life—for the question of the dependence of putrefaction upon the presence of germs owes its interest and its passionate pursuit to medicine—are drawn into the widening vortex of our studies. Further still : the structure of the earth is bidden to reveal what part it plays in the production of disease ; nor does the geologist touch a stratum too deep, or too remote, for the physician to have an interest in his researches. The explorers of the deepest sea-bottom aid him in the study of respiration ; the student of storms for him discovers ozone ; and the spectroscope, we may be sure, will not have done its work till the study of the remotest star lays its offering at the feet of the healer of disease. We have—or, in the person of the physician of the future, shall have—an interest in the colours Sirius flashes back to the patient eye of the astronomer ; for they will teach us something more of the planet upon which we dwell. Nay, the milky way itself becomes our servant, and holds up before us in its forms of beauty, winding in spiral clusters through infinitude, the very image of the living forms we question with half-hopeless curiosity beneath



the highest powers of our microscopes. The physicians are, as it were, the hands of man—of all creatures the most full of needs, and by his needs crowned ruler of them all—his hands, stretched forth to gather, from every quarter, aid for his infirmities, resources for his weakness. And every science is a hand stretched forth in answer.

But that is the worst of it. It is (as a great American, a physician also, says) like shaking hands with Briareus. To invite the universe into our dwellings is to run great risk of being turned out of doors ourselves.

But this is not all. It is not the physical world alone that the physician has to explore to its utmost bounds; the other world of the human mind and its emotions no less claims his study. Not only those among you who will devote yourselves to the treatment of mental disease will be called upon to trace out the mutual workings of mind and body, and note, with the utmost delicacy you can attain, the point at which a bodily disorder begins to react on the emotions; or when a mental shock or strain, or worry too much succumbed to, reveals itself in impaired functions of the body; this is the common duty of us all, and one which daily acquires a greater urgency.



More than ever now the medical man becomes, or should become, the friend, the confidant, the counsellor of his patient. A place too seldom filled by him, yet impossible to be filled except by him, stands vacant—that of a friend whose trained knowledge and quick sympathy should be able to unravel for each man and each woman, in these perplexed and restless days, what is merely physical, what mental, in their distresses ; where it is only an impaired digestion that fills the mind with morbid phantoms, or where an unwise or excessive care makes discord in the delicate harmony of the nerves, and sends perverted currents to every organ.

More than ever now the physician must have knowledge of the soul ; must feel, with finer senses, other pulses ; and measure heats and chills which no thermometer can gauge. The mind, the passions, are his study ; unwitting of these, or unregardful, half his work—often the larger half—is unperformed. Calm himself, he must for his fellow know ambition and despair ; must feel how fiercely burns desire, and with what a leaden weight failure seals up the springs of life. He must enter into the depths of another man's remorse, or how can he know how it corrodes the frame, and turns even the healing waters to bitterness ? And his soul, too, must thrill with



another's joy, lest he ascribe fancied powers to his drugs, and turn the very gladness of one man to the mortal damage of another. For who will tell us how much medicine has suffered by false virtues ascribed to remedies, because, perhaps, the doctor has wrapped up hope with his pills, or a sudden gladness has seemed to make an ordinary draught a very cup of Life?

But not even then is our full task accomplished. As students of the mind as well as the body, we approach man under a fresh aspect. He is no more a mere series of disconnected units, each of which may be adequately regarded by itself. In his intellectual and moral nature man reveals himself as a being of a new order: a wider unity dawns upon us. In science, in art, in social order, and in moral life, Man lives on from age to age: he grows, develops, rises through lower into higher forms. Nor have watchful eyes been wanting to note the parallel which this life of consciousness affords to the history of bodily development. It is an Organic Being that we see in Man; in Man, who thinks from age to age more truly and feels more widely, creates social order, and lays down and changes laws; and the science of his life and growth opens before us a new and larger physiology. In the central government and its agents we



see again the brain and nerves ; in the producers of commodities and those who distribute them, down to the smallest retail dealer, there stand before us a transfigured digestive and circulatory system. We cannot, if we would, refuse the parallel ; and, indeed, it fascinates us by its interest. We look back to the history of the body politic, and note how, in its earliest form—like the earliest form of the other body—it is an undistinguished mass, every part of which performs functions that are the same ; how by degrees, owing to increasing wants and varying relations, special portions of the body, or the society, assume special functions, and, as the special aptitudes develop, become unfitted for any other ; how these specially organised parts are brought into more and more complex union, and become mutually more and more dependent : one life working visibly through the varied whole, and finding its organs ready to its hand.

If the structure of the lower creatures claims our study, and we feel that we cannot expect to understand aright the human frame unless we know also these less complex forms, how can we withhold our study from this grander life arising thus before our eyes, and in the progress of which we and our own efforts are tributary powers ? What would we not give to



see an 'ultimate atom' with our microscopes? But, behold, we ourselves are the very atoms we explore ; and the mysterious forces which attract them and repel, we feel : they group our fellow-men around us, and our responsive energies reveal to us their power.

So we are swept on, even beyond our goal : we cannot stop where we would. This wonderful frame of man's, which is our special business, is no end ; it floats, as it were, on a larger stream, to which we must commit ourselves if we would grasp it rightly. Could we know *one* molecule of our own frame, and its diseases, if we ignored the life it served or marred ? How, then, these atom-minds and bodies of our fellows, save by knowledge of the life they help to constitute ?

This is no novelty. 'The science of medicine,' says the physician in Plato's 'Banquet,' 'is, in a word, a knowledge of the love affairs of the body ; and he is the most skilful physician who can trace these operations of the good and evil love, can make the one change places with the other, can attract Love to those parts in which he is absent, and expel him from those which he ought not to occupy. Our progenitor, Æsculapius, through the skill which he possessed to inspire love and concord in these contending principles, established the science of medicine.'



Since then, the science has drifted very far from thoughts like these, and many mechanical and chemical theories have sought to explain the mysteries of normal and abnormal life; but the last thoughts of science bring back to us an echo of the words.

All things solicit us. Of course they do. We have aspired to take life for our domain; does it surprise us to find it boundless?—Let us look into this matter a little more closely.

In all your studies, scarcely anything will give you a keener or more legitimate pleasure than when your physiological lecturer conducts you through researches—many of them the fruits of his own zeal—which will show you some of the most mysterious results of life resolved into simple physical or chemical processes; processes which you may see carried on outside the body. You will feel a pride, almost as of a victory gained, on seeing the hard-drawn line between the organic and the inorganic efface itself before your eyes; as if plain and demonstrable laws of physics were destined to illumine for you the darkest recesses of the world of life. And (as it seems to me at least) this process *is* destined to go on until all that has been deemed distinctive of life has



been included under the inorganic laws. But let this task have been achieved, shall we have resolved life into physics? Rather physics will have revealed itself as life.

If there is nothing more in the powers of the organic world than is contained in the forces and relations of the inorganic world around, which seems so much inferior, what we shall have learnt will be that this inferior world is more than we had taken it for. In studying the organic world, we are judging the inorganic by its fruits. Assuredly out of nothing nothing comes; deadness does not give birth to life.

Let us but disprove the fiction of a vital force endowed with powers other than those of the universal force, and we have achieved a triumph worth achieving over our own ignorance and false impressions. We shall then have demonstrated that there is no dead world—that the seeming of it is an illusion of our sense. We shall know that the false distinction that has been drawn is a result of our partial seeing.

Of this we have other instances. What seems plainer to *us* than the unity of motion in every place, and under every form? But to the Greeks—looking at motion as it is presented to the sense—it seemed



not one, but diverse. To them the motions seen in the heavens, never ceasing in their course, were incorruptible; the terrestrial motions, always ceasing after a longer or shorter time, were corruptible. Because they had not learned to see that the motions that ceased also went on unceasingly, they divided the motion we know to be one into two, and called them immortal and perishing, living and dead. They judged by sense. But even so do we judge when we divide the one world around and within us into two, and call them organic and inorganic, living and dead. All motion is incorruptible; unceasing, though its form perpetually changes, and thus baffles the uninstructed eye. All nature is living, though only here and there can our eye penetrate its secret, and our uninstructed sense misleads us to ascribe to it those properties merely which the narrow powers of sense can apprehend. What mattered it that—to our fathers' belief—every terrestrial motion ceased? The unceasing motion in the heavens bore silent witness that motion is a deathless thing; and the lagging intellect of man has risen, even with us, to abjure the thought that things that are different to our senses cannot be the same. Even so does the life we recognise bear continual witness (to which our ears cannot be deaf much longer) that life is absent nowhere. What



matters it that we have dreamt of dead mechanical relations ?

Nature is simple, with the grand simplicity that we call necessity—a perfect intellectual order ; but the falsely simple things, that are simple by mere poverty of being, owe their seeming simplicity to our lack of perception ; and one of the chief benefits the study of physiology confers on man is that it helps him to rise, by knowledge of a part, to a truer vision of the whole.

It is easy, however, to see why nature has been recognised as living only in certain forms. If we examine these forms, we find that in them a process that is universal is presented to us in a peculiar manner. In the organic world we see wholes ; in all else we see but fragments. Wherever in nature we see the relations of force complete, there we tend to recognise life. For all action in nature has this character—that it comprises equal opposites. Wherever any action begins an equal action ceases ; every process has for necessary accompaniment an opposite process that is its complement, and leaves the total relations of force unchanged.

Now in the organic world this relation is presented visibly to our eye. The opposite actions are bound up together in a continuous series, each generating



the other within a limited space, and maintaining by their sequence within those limits a perpetuity of movement. The organic differs from the inorganic by the *limit* applied to the transference or distribution of force ; so that the correlated opposites pass in a circle so contracted that our eye can follow them, and see that there is no break, no ceasing. It is the same in the inorganic ; but we do not see it there till science, illumining our blindness, shows us that, beneath the seeming immobility and isolation, there exists the same constant activity without pause or break.

As science shows us that the terrestrial motions truly *are* that which the celestial motions are visibly—unceasing ; so science has taught us also to see that the inorganic world is, in its perpetual activity and balanced energy, the same as organic beings are visibly to sense. Simply the organic changes move in a more contracted sphere.

Thus, in ‘living things,’ Nature gives us a key to the universal order. She makes herself small enough for us to see her ; that by the smaller she may lead us to the larger. It is a law, gentlemen, that the more is revealed to us by the less ; and the seeming greater thing ever is the greater becoming less. It is as if the vastness of the universe remembered our infirmi-



ties and bowed its grandeur to the pettiness of our perceiving that we might know it.

Aided most essentially by the light which the study of the living body has given him, the physicist has learnt to recognise, through all Nature, a perpetual series of activities of various modes. But there is one of these modes of action which is presented to us with a special emphasis in the organic world—namely, the storing up of force and its liberation. In the animal body we give to this sequence the special name of nutrition and function, because in it the object attained by the liberation of the force is one of a utility obvious to us, and directly exciting our sympathies ; but the process itself is of course by no means a specially animal or organic one. Through all Nature force is perpetually being stored up and given off, and results no less marked ensue. Though often destructive, they are often also of a service perfectly visible to us. Every electric discharge, the thunder-storm, the earthquake, the very light of the sun, and the rain are instances. In every sudden exhibition of energy we see it ; and Nature is full of such sudden strokes, mingling with other forms of action to complete the sum of her perpetual change.

But in the world we term organic we see this process—the storing up and setting free of force—as it



were specialised, and imparting to it an emphatic character. The living structure is a structure containing force ; it is as a bow drawn tense ; as a weight suspended. The fact that it contains force, ready for sudden exertion when a call arises, or for more continuous service in more constant processes, is at the same time one of its chief distinctions, and one of the characters which it possesses in common with many things that are not termed living. The organic world presents to us this special relation of force not as peculiar to itself indeed, yet with a unique and special prominence : so that it stands before us almost as if it were a part of Nature to which a special function had fallen. As we see the developing animal body putting forth various organs which carry to the utmost pitch each its peculiar function—muscle for motion, nerves for conduction, and the rest—so we might well deem that in the whole organic world we saw before us an ‘organ’ of a mightier frame : an organ devoted, as to its special function, to the storing up of force to work ulterior ends.

The apparent distinctness of the organic world should be to us, if we judged consistently, a mark, not of the absence but of the presence of life in the great whole of which it forms a part. For life puts



forth special organs, and here is one—in the organic world. Doubtless there are more, when we shall have learnt to see them.

Thus it is that the student of medicine inevitably has for his study the whole realm of Nature. The tales of our ancestors tell us of a cup offered to Thor to drink. It seemed but a fair goblet, a few gallons, enough, perchance, to drown a man, such as he had often quaffed, and he took it laughingly; but for all his drinking the cup scarcely became emptier. It was the ocean that he drank. And to you also, gentlemen, is offered a cup, a fair-sized cup, just the knowledge of the human frame—a fair goblet for a thirsty soul. But drain it, drink your fill, exhaust your power; you will find it full as ever: it is the ocean you are drinking.

For if we look at the living body thus—see it as an exhibition of nutrition and function, or of force stored up and an action effected by its liberation—if we recognise that this process is the same in the organic body and in the inorganic world, we can understand why the study of the bodily life has drawn within its compass not only, on the one hand, that of all inorganic force, but, on the other, that of the whole conscious life of man. For in this conscious life we do but meet with the same process under another form. And though our time affords us space but for the



merest outline, I should like to make this, if I can, in some small degree clear to you, so greatly does it add to the interest of your chief study.

Suppose that on any subject we are studying we start with a false assumption, there is one way, and but one, in which we are cured. We have to take the trouble of tracing out the consequences of the false assumption, until, through the weight of their unreasonableness, we are compelled to let them go, and accept a different thought. Every *reductio ad absurdum* in our Euclid presents to us the process; there is an effort, a strain, a tension put upon the mind, and as it ceases the premiss is corrected. Force is stored up, and as it is set free a 'function' comes, which is the change in our fundamental thought.

Now, take the last great generalisation of science—that which, perhaps, more than any other, will make the scientific glory of the age just past—the unity of force. Is not the process of its attainment plainly that which I have described?—a vast nutrition which had that new vision for its function. It came by a *reductio ad absurdum*. For man's senses gave him a false assumption to start with. They showed him, not the presence of one force, but the appearance of many—arbitrary, disjointed, beginning and ceasing. The electric flash passes and seems to be altogether



gone; the wave dies on the shore, but the shore does not move. My mere will seems to me to move my arm, and when its motion is over there is an end.

What could men have done but what they did?—trace out (as they did with splendid exactitude and completeness) the result of examining Nature on the assumption of many separate forces. And they surrounded themselves accordingly with fictitious entities—imponderable fluids and so on—without end. What a weight of suppositions they had to bear! But it fell at last (most happily for us); and the strain and tension of the mind found relief in the thought of a simple constancy of action appearing under various forms.

We recognise familiarly the identity of the raising of a weight with the nutrition of a muscle, and of the fall of the weight with the contraction of the muscle. But is not the parallel equally obvious in this living process of the mind?—the toilsome raising of the weight of false hypothesis and its sudden fall, effecting a function not less distinct. A poet has seen this before. Listen to the words Shelley puts into the mouth of Prometheus:—

Hark the rushing snow!

The sun-awakened avalanche, whose mass,  
Thrice-sifted by the storm, had gathered there,  
Flake after flake;—in fate-defying minds



So thought on thought is piled, till some great truth  
Is loosened, and the nations echo round,  
Shaken to their roots, as do the mountains now.

Thus it is that our advance in knowledge comes by means of crises—by sudden changes gradually prepared for—truer apprehensions to which the very piling up of false thoughts conducts. Wherever ignorance lies at the root, knowledge comes life-wise—by nutrition and function.

And when we advance to the moral life, we see the same laws ruling there also. As we glance back over history, what is more striking than the false *laws* with which man has bound himself—the false thoughts of right to which he has made himself a slave? When we look at His life to whom our highest life is due,<sup>1</sup> what do we see but the casting aside of needless, hurtful laws, and the grand teaching of a new simplicity of right, one and the same in every changing form? And that He who so taught us gave the true key to life, Nature herself bears witness. As ignorance imposes falsity, and makes the very powers of truth work error, so by a parallel necessity does lack of true goodness in the soul compel man to lay upon himself false laws, and make the very powers of good

<sup>1</sup> The highest life of some other nations has been given them through the instrumentality of various men; but it is clearly to be seen, in respect to many of these, that they were also deliverers from false laws.



work an intenser evil. Nor arbitrarily is this done, nor wastefully ; but—through the same beneficence of life that rules in his body and his mind—to work the same end also for the soul, and by the toil of the nutrition to bring the gladness of the function. False laws, that make a *tension* in the life and set the soul at variance with itself, as they *fall*, bring into the heart of man a truer and better goodness ; and even the darkness of superstition is preparation for the light.

Thus we see in a fresh light why it is that the student of medicine must be the student of all knowledge ; he studies life, and life is all.

But never yet was task imposed on man that did not bring its recompense ; never yet did difficulty confront him, but Nature stood at hand with a secret, waiting for him to learn it—the secret of converting difficulty itself into ease. If to know life aright all things must be known, then by life also *shall* all things be known. Like an heir just come of age, the physician of the present day is distracted with the wealth of his inheritance. It is for you to enter on its full and unembarrassed use. To the whole world—of nature and of man—the human body is the key, unlocking all its treasures. The physician stands at the centre, and sees all roads diverge—all roads clear and straight to him, because he holds in his hands a map



of every land. His eye is fixed upon the pattern to which all things conform ; into the very substance of his thought have grown, by long and loving search, the laws which speed the progress of the human soul, and breathe into the dust of earth the breath of life.

So much is life the key to all things, and the human frame the key to life, that we may fairly say there is no department of human knowledge in which the quickening influence of the physician must not and will not be felt. The laws of physics and of chemistry are but too partially perceived till we see them, as it were completed and in their perfect cycle, in the organic body. And, turning to the other direction, how vaguely are the mind and soul of man apprehended until, by aid of the revelations of organic life, a clue to their history and the significance of their processes is grasped ! Seeing them thus, we enter upon them with a new understanding. We perceive that the results man first gains with so much effort are valuable, not for themselves, but for the truer good they are destined to bring, and which comes to us in their seeming loss ; that we first possess our own labours truly when we have them in their fruits ; our truths in fuller truths, our rights in deeper rights.

Nor is the advantage one of thought alone, but eminently one of practice. Interpreted thus by life,



the mental and moral experience of man would itself become more truly living, and the supple vigour of an organic process replace more fully the mechanical rigidity with which we still seek vainly to supply its want. As of the living frame, so the true excellence and the true stability of the mental and moral life of man are in its perpetual change, its fluency to Nature, its unity with her.

And thus, perchance, there dawns on us a truer vision of the place which the student of medicine should rightly occupy in human life—shall in the future occupy. Holding in his hands the chief key to life, it will be from him, if he worthily fulfils his part, that all men must derive their best suggestions. Of all sciences, of all arts, his art and science must be the rallying point and centre ; by its facts all theories be judged, by his successes or failures all other efforts guided.

Only when the thought of a Life in them makes them luminous, shall any work of man's hand or labour of his brain be rightly transparent to his eye. Only when the task of rightly dealing with the human body, duly achieved, has marked out the path, shall man with a true success apply his energy to any other toil. Let me take one instance (and I take it by preference from our failures) ;—the now acknow-



ledged excess to which bloodletting was carried in former days. As lovers of the art of healing, we must look back with regret to a practice by which life was hurt instead of aided. Yet, if we could learn aright its lesson, we might find that the error had been a boon to man. For why was it that physicians, fully the equals in zeal and intelligence of any that have succeeded them, persisted so long in a practice which thwarted their own end? This chiefly: that depletion did attain the ends for which it was employed—did quiet the pulse, relieve pain, and transfer the patient from a condition of intense distress and obvious danger to one of manifest relief. The success deceived: the immediate end was gained, and it seemed as if, could the means be carried out with sufficient zeal, it would secure everything. There was the visible demonstrable good: how should it not have been pursued? What our fathers too little regarded was the fact that the human body is a living thing, with infinite reactions.

Medicine has repented of its error; has carried, as some think, its repentance also to excess. At any rate it has learnt to look with more reverence upon the mysterious living thing with which it has to deal, and to understand that the direct results it can secure by its interference embrace but a small part of the pro-



blem it has to grapple with. But medicine has not learnt this lesson for itself alone. There is another living frame on which men also aspire to act the physician's part—the frame of the social organism. And is it not obvious how much our errors may teach men here?—how strongly they tend to succumb to the illusions which deluded us; to take no account of the untold reactions of the living frame, and look only at the immediate results they can secure—victims, like us, of their own success; rushing to meet every evil with some mechanic remedy; as if this great life, which man's heart and soul work out for themselves, were a mere dead mechanic thing?

They do but follow in our steps, falling under the same temptations; but therefore should ours be the eyes to see for them.

Only one more remark. In the very depths of the soul we see that the laws of life prevail. Not less than the intellect, the conscience also owns them; and because the moral progress is a life, it also has bent itself, and surely will ever bend itself, to hear what the study, not only of man's bodily constitution, but of his bodily infirmities, has to tell.

The future shall be like the past. Of old, there stood before a Man, on the one hand, a law, forbid-



ding Him to labour on the Sabbath, enforced with all divine authority as interpreted by the reputed wisdom and godliness of his age :—this law on the one hand ; and on the other a poor lame man's sorrow. The Man before whom these two claims came—God's, as all men said, and his fellow's—chose which He would heed : and He gave us a new law. He cured the *body* ; and mankind, never ungrateful, never unknowing of their friends, have called Him the Physician of the *soul*.

The needs of man interpret the laws of God. And who stands so close to the needs of man as you will, gentlemen, to whom, in their very direst need, *all* will cling ; to whose voice sick hearts will listen as if it were the very voice of God declaring judgment or mercy ; the very skirts of whose garments, if only a heart beats beneath them, faint hands will be raised to touch ? Closest to the very sources of the life of the human soul you will stand ; it is the physician's place. Of the highest law he is made interpreter.

Thus in the limitless extension of the knowledge which our art demands we may see a proud meaning, a proud prophecy. In stretching out its hands on every side it does but take possession of its own dominion ; it does but establish channels through which, into every department of life, even those which



seem the most remote, it shall diffuse a vivifying and re-creating power.

These are dreams, doubtless. Every achievement by which man's life has been enriched was a dream once. Only the facts are greater and grander than the dreams, and contain in them the germs of still greater facts to come, which to our eye are evils, and keep us looking to a future still; so that our very discontent is proof of the wealth of our possession. A harvest is not the less rich because a larger seed-time seems to absorb it all. Every good that becomes a fact was once a dream. But no dream ever became a fact except by steps that were no dream—through patient, quiet labour, content to bring, day by day, that one day's work, asking no question but that it should be what it pretended. By what minute and tedious dissections Hunter made into a certainty his dream of a great unity of life through all the animated world; by what painstaking and protracted experiments Jenner confirmed the dream of a protection against small-pox; by what ungrudging labour of observation and comparison did our own Bright and Addison establish the pathology of the diseases that bear their name, and give a new precision to the healing art! Such as these are the steps by which



man's dreams have become his proud realities ; and your steps, gentlemen—true steps, in all reality, remote though they may seem, to more than I have dared to image forth—are the diligent study of the humble sciences that lie immediately before you.



ON A LAW OF HUMAN LIFE.







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ONE of the best-known modes of progress in knowledge is that which has received the name of the *reductio ad absurdum*, or *correction of the premiss*: that is, the fundamental thought which is taken as the starting point, in any given case, being imperfect, false conclusions are rendered necessary; and by the casting aside of these conclusions a truer fundamental thought is brought in. In the following remarks I shall endeavour to show that the correction of the premiss is the mode in which both the intellectual and the moral Life of the human race advance.

I. In respect to the intellectual life, man's advance is from ignorance; and from ignorance to knowledge (apart from direct instruction from without) there is no other path than through the correction of the premiss. This is the necessary form of the *attainment* of knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One or two qualifications, not at all affecting the proposition, need perhaps to be made: thus, (1) When the premiss has been corrected



If the reader will recall any ordinary mental process, he will perceive, that when, in any case, he is ignorant of any essential circumstance, the conclusions he draws will not be true. The omission of truth, if any process of reasoning takes place, necessarily involves us in error. A person, for example, not knowing the existence of steam, would necessarily suppose false powers in the things moved by it. A man not knowing the weight of the atmosphere, by which lighter bodies are raised, must attribute to a balloon a power of 'rising' that it does not possess. Savages, not knowing eclipses, have inferred devouring monsters. It is impossible that reasoning, in ignorance, should have any other effect than that of leading us to erroneous conclusions. Nor is the case different, if instead of reasoning, or together with it, observation be employed. Observation, based upon assumptions that include too little, leads also necessarily to error. So chemists, formerly, observing with all exactness the effect of *burning*, but without

in any particular case there lies open a course, more or less fruitful, of observation and reasoning upon the new premiss thus acquired, before there arises the need for a repetition of the process. (2) A certain knowledge we may be said to possess without any process of acquiring it at all; namely, the knowledge that we have certain sensations. (3) It may be held by some that there is also a certain further amount of 'instinctive' knowledge possessed by man which is exempt from this law, not having to be acquired.



knowing that oxygen unites with the burning body, and that part of it is carried off in invisible gas, thought that something which they called *phlogiston* was given off by bodies in burning. The things we can directly observe are, at the utmost, but parts ; and we cannot put them truthfully together while the parts which we cannot directly observe are wanting. Now, in ordinary affairs, no one either doubts or complains of the law that if he does not know the facts he falls into erroneous conclusions. Reason would not exist if it were otherwise. And if we turn to wider spheres it is evidently as little desirable, and as little possible, that ignorance should not lead to error. It is by means of the error that the ignorance is banished ; by means of the false conclusions the premiss is rendered more complete, for by them men are driven to seek a truer thought. On how grand a scale this method of learning has been carried out, it needs but slight acquaintance with science to perceive. All the ancient astronomy, before the discovery of the earth's motion, was one magnificent demonstration in this form ; ignorance of that one fact compelled it to be so.

But it is needless to multiply instances. Absence of knowledge has for its inevitable fruit this result : that the right exercise of our faculties leads, at first, not to



true but to false conclusions. The only means whereby our progress to knowledge can be made harmonious is in frankly recognising and accepting this law of our Life. For, be it ever so well understood, if it be not consciously accepted in its application to every problem which Nature presents to us, we turn against ourselves the very powers by which we might advance.

Conceive a master carrying a class, in good faith and with a view to their own real discovery of the truth, through a *reductio ad absurdum*: we perceive all the pupils starting from a common false conviction (for ignorance always feels itself to be knowledge); then, as the master's good logic or good observation carried them to the false conclusion, inevitably the class would divide itself into two portions: one affirming the false conclusion because supported by sound reasoning, or clear evidence; the other feeling the conclusion to be false, and insisting therefore on finding some flaw in the demonstration. Strife and opposition would come, and an endeavour to wrest from one another that which each maintained; a strife which must continue until the meaning of the process was perceived, and the premiss corrected. The pupils would divide themselves into two sides, according as they felt most the validity of the *process* by which the



false result was proved, or the unreason of the result itself. In any ordinary case, this condition of strife, of course, would last but a short time ; but if the problem were really one of great complexity, capable of being solved only by long-continued effort, and especially if demanding the joint effort of many minds, it is evident that (the nature of the process not being consciously recognised—the master giving no hint), this condition of strife and opposition might go on very long. Now mankind are situated thus as a class before Nature ; she is our schoolmistress, we are her pupils ; she carries us through one *reductio ad absurdum* after another, *and she gives us no hint.*

So, if we overlook this law, we turn our efforts into a false direction. The true use of the results that are gained by our very best efforts, on a starting point that is incomplete, consists not in their being held, but in their being given up in the right way. To discover that right way of giving up even the very best results we could attain is man's true task ; the task that perpetually comes to him, and must come to him again and again, so long as his knowledge remains incomplete, and his powers of perceiving limited. Our true end is to banish the ignorance within, and attain a true starting-point ; and if we do not thoroughly accept it, we divide into hostile camps the



powers which Nature gave us for mutual aid, and waste in fruitless fighting energies which, if we perceived our task aright, would be found to be each other's complements.

This is perfectly simple. There is certainly nothing in what has been said that is not entirely well known; but is it fairly applied in any relation of human thought? Simple as it is, its consequences are very great. One of these is, that in every case we are bound to ask not only whether the forces which move us are those of truth, but whether the basis on which they operate is also true. Nature calls us, in order to attain true knowledge, to regard two things; not only whether our conclusions are truly drawn, but whether the premisses from which we draw them are also true: but we tend to content ourselves with regarding one of these alone. When we perceive that a power of truth is leading us—clear reason or obvious fact—it seems to us that we fulfil all our duty if we follow it; a duty, indeed, we do thus fulfil, but it is only half. Truth on a basis of ignorance means not truth, but error. We must be prepared for this.

Another result of this nature of learning is, that the true right always comes to us in the form of giving up right. For the conclusions imposed on us by sound



reason or true observation, while there is ignorance in the basis, though they are false, come to us in the form of truth. Ignorance within imposes on man a false law—the law of thinking according to the appearances: a law he cannot disobey, yet in the obeying of which no true duty is done; in yielding to truth he enacts falsehood; his right is a wrong right, his truth a false truth. In respect to knowledge, absence within means false rights without.

Now to this cause is due the chief part of the difficulty that is found in the advance of truth. It arises from the demand, that is inevitable in *new* knowledge, for a letting go of that which has been enforced upon the mind by proofs to which the mind was bound to submit. Evidently this is a much harder task than merely yielding to proof, and consenting to accept evidence, and give up prepossessions. Difficult as this demand may be to minds constituted as ours are, it is a difficulty vastly inferior to that of abandoning opinions to which not prejudice or indolence has inclined us, but which our best zeal, our most rigid accuracy, even in spite of our own inclinations, it may be, have compelled us. Truth identifies itself in the soul of man, and rightly, with the highest moral obligation: to give up what truth has evidently and consciously compelled upon us—and the



more if it be a thing distasteful to us, and calling on us for restraint of feelings we tend to indulge—affects the soul as a crime. This it is that has made the advance of knowledge so slow in times past ; has embittered it with anger, stained it with blood. This: that ignorance imposes a *false right*. Not for follies, prejudices, indolence, indifference, have men striven against their brothers ; but for the voice of God within their souls ; for that which was most precious ; for which, if they had not striven to the utmost, they had lost more than all knowledge could repay.

But also this fact, that *the* difficulty in the advance of knowledge lies in the demand it makes for the giving up of that which the pursuit of truth has imposed, and relaxing the grasp on that which has inevitably identified itself with right ; this fact gives absolute assurance of the prevalence of truth. If that which opposed it were prejudice, or indolence, or any form of desire for ill, then it might wage a doubtful strife. Perchance man's evil (though far be it from us to believe it possible) might have been too strong. But since what most opposes truth is a false thought of truth itself, truth cannot fail to triumph. The powers that oppose it are its own ; casting it down, they bear it up ; its seeming enemies yield up their own life to make it live. For this submission of man's soul to



truth, which in ignorance gives the false truth its power, is that which ensures the yielding of the ignorance when the choice is fairly brought before man's mind. The false truths gain their power only by the ignorance which perverts truth to falsity ; and when habit ceases to invest them with this usurped dominion, there is no more a contest to be waged.

Thus, in so far as our advance consists in the gaining of a completer starting point, this consequence is involved : the true attainment of knowledge means that that which was a duty becomes no more a duty. Our learning must have this character whenever it fulfils our chief requirement, and penetrates deeper into regions of ignorance unassailed before. It is essentially a deliverance, a setting free. Because the character, above all, of ignorance is that it is a binder of bonds, an imposer of falsity with the outside characters of truth ; falsity against which we struggle in vain, while the ignorance is still within us, because ignorance perverts the very power of truth to enchain us, and yet against which man struggles with absolute success, because through his very obedience his deliverance is wrought.

This becomes more evident when the various forces which are engaged in a correction of the premiss are considered. In its most usual form it has been a



strife between sense and reason as to which shall rule; based upon the fact that our sense-perception is always a perception of *appearances*. Now, it is not the nature of appearances to be in accordance with the demands of the reason; on various grounds it is impossible that they should be. Among the chief of these is, that our perception by sense is extremely partial. Hence comes, as before remarked, the appearance of numerous isolated forces in Nature, instead of one force in changing form. And since, if the whole be rational, that is itself a reason against isolated fragments, put together as we may happen to perceive them, being rational, it is evident that any arrangement of the appearances alone will be opposed to the reason. However much of reason may be employed in the arrangement, it will still be so. The absence of reason involved in their partialness cannot be eliminated, but only for a time concealed. A thought that is conformed to the appearances (or sense-perceptions), therefore, inevitably lays bonds on man; it lays bonds upon his reason. And the solving of the *reductio ad absurdum* thus instituted consists in the rightful assertion of the claims of reason over those of sense; not crushing them, nor putting them aside, but fulfilling them, by the recognition of the unperceived elements, of which



sense had given no account. So far the correction of the premiss is the introduction into our thought of some element unperceived by sense.

Thus it follows also that the history of human advance is by no means one of simple continuous progress, but presents a series of revolutions. Again and again it presents to us a process more or less long, apparently tending to one end, but resulting in another, and in one also altogether unexpected ; necessarily unexpected, and even striven against, while the universal operation of this law is overlooked. That which *experience* teaches when we read it truly, is not that the thoughts which Man has had will continue to be his, but that in everything in which a great and fundamental revolution *has not* already occurred, such a revolution will certainly occur in the future. In respect to thought, nothing is stable that has not undergone this radical change—of receiving a new starting-point. The true lesson of experience teaches us to expect it, even as reason shows us its necessity.

And reason and experience, also, alike exhibit to us the characters which mark the stages of the process. A correction of the premiss involves that good reasoning and sound evidence—a *process* altogether valid—lead to *results* that cannot be accepted. The process



good, the results untrue. It is the embodiment, in fact, of the words: 'Either make the tree good and his fruit good, or else the tree evil and his fruit evil.' It is Nature's law that each tree—all acted upon alike by her good forces—brings forth fruits after his kind. The approaching completion of a correction of the premiss is marked especially by this—that good processes, actions dictated and guided perfectly by right, inferences sound in logic, observations of perfect honesty and skill, lead to conclusions that are intolerable to the reason; so that strife and doubt arise, and, above all, a suspicion that true knowledge is impossible. It has all the appearance of a failure and limitation of our faculties; for they are obviously set against themselves. Before the crisis, comes a lull; before the revelation of the new knowledge, despondency. What experience truly teaches us to expect is great and sudden changes: the attainment of new perceptions of facts unperceived before, which shall give new bases to all our thoughts; and these fundamental changes preceded by special strife and mistrust of our powers.

II. And in the moral life, is it not to the full as visible that the law of man's advance is the correction of his starting-point? For what is more evident than



that he begins with absence of the true emotions—*with moral ignorance?* and what more visible in the whole course of his history, than that his very efforts after good have led him into evil? For this is the sadness and ‘mystery’ of human life, the thing that most tends to sink us in despair: not that evil is so strong, but that such a blight seems to attend also the very seeking after good. The very powers on which we must rely seem to play us false; not only evil has brought evil, but effort for right itself has ended in calamity, even in corruption. But this is the very process whereby a correction of the premiss is wrought out. It comes by man being compelled to open his eyes afresh, and regard more things; compelled to say ‘It is true that right, to me, as I have been feeling and acting, has meant *these things*; but I must have a different thought, a different feeling, that right may no more mean these things to me.’ This is the problem of the correction of the premiss: to fulfil the condition of right no more meaning to us that which it has meant; of *beginning* so that duties which we could not have put aside before become no more our duties. ‘Our fathers said that on this mountain was the place where we should worship God; you say it is Jerusalem. Where must we worship? How far must we travel? what trouble undergo?’ There is no *where*;



let but the soul worship, and there lies no toil upon the body.

But thus we see that, no less than in the intellectual life, the moral and religious life must also have been a strife, a battle: not of evil and good alone, but one in which good must have seemed divided against itself—a truer right calling for the giving up of that which right itself had brought. For in respect to right also there lies on us a twofold demand, and we are prone to recognise but one and to ignore the other; two demands lie on us—not only to see that we follow that which right enforces, but to see also that our right also operates on a true basis. This latter obligation man leaves unfulfilled long after he has learnt to accept, and earnestly try to fulfil, the former. For very, very long he is content to say, ‘Right means this to me, and I will do it,’ before he will ask himself, ‘Is my soul truly right within, and if it were so, would right to me mean this?’ And many and most disastrous evils he endures, never suspecting that his right can be in fault, before he is driven to ask, ‘Ought not right to me to be a different thing?’ But God has so ordained his life, that he cannot put the question away for ever; not even in the things he feels most sure of, and counts most sacred.

For, indeed, the more intense his feeling of right,



in the things that right on an imperfect basis brings, the more holy, necessary, and utterly beyond profanation he feels them, so much the more potent on his soul is the demand God makes for him to let them go : the greater and deeper the change that must accompany the loosing of his grasp upon them.

And what the power is by which this change is to be wrought we need not ask, for it is shown us. How sacred must the Jews have thought resting on the Sabbath day, when they would let men suffer, die perchance, rather than it be broken? But there was one thing more sacred. The power that God sends against the rights that a false condition of the soul imposes, is the needs of our fellow-men. By these He teaches us what the service is that He demands ; how deep it goes into the desires ; exacting from the soul nothing less than such a turning of its thought to others that its service has no need of rigid forms in which to clothe itself, but is free to follow wheresoever, by human want, His will is revealed. For, in the moral life, the falsity in the starting-point is that others are not present *from the first* in our regard, so that our very goodness, our very worship, centre about ourselves. This makes our righteousness self-righteousness, our virtue a self-virtue ; binds us to deeds for goodness' sake that are not one with service to our fellows.



It were an infinite joy if this law were true of our life. For there are two characters that belong of necessity to a correction of the starting-point. One is, that as soon as it is understood, the task is already done. The difficulty lies not in making the correction, but in the discovery that it is needed ; the task and labour are in working out the false rights ; the substitution for them of the more right beginning is, not labour, but deliverance. By its very nature, the truer right, the corrected premiss, is always the *easier* thing ; it is at once more and easier, a better achievement and less toil. It is an entering into rest ; the want that imposed the toil having been supplied. Other men labour, and those to whose eyes it is given to see that what they need is a truer beginning, reap the fruits.

And there is an infinite joy again in this, that though the *working out* of the correction of a premiss is a process of darkness, a very mystery of evil, compelling strife, and making peace impossible in spite of all desire ; yet when once its meaning is understood all is changed : a new light breaks over the past, a new spirit descends into the present. The strife ceases ; a meaning and end become visible in every part ; an assured victory is made manifest in each defeat.



ON THE RELATION BETWEEN  
THE ORGANIC AND INORGANIC WORLDS.







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IN the first paper it has been rather assumed than argued, that the marked differences we perceive between the organic and inorganic worlds arise not from unlikeness in the things themselves, but from the different mode in which they are presented to us. It was with this view that the history of man's thought in respect to *motion* was adduced.

Motion is one thing in Nature; but when the Greek thought of it, he divided it into two kinds, and contrasted them sharply; when we think of it, we think of it as one; though to us, as much as to him, there are only unending motions in the heavens, only ending motions on the earth. Now the interest of this change of thought lies in this: that we see in it, first, the tacit, unsuspecting assumption of an absolute difference between two parts of Nature, as if it were obvious beyond question; and secondly, the awakening of the mind to perceive that the difference was



but apparent, and arose from a difference in the mode in which these parts of Nature are presented to the sense. We see man's dawning consciousness of the necessity under which he lies, in order rightly to understand the world, to be aware of the shortcomings of his perception, and to include within his thought that which seems at first to contradict his sense.

The proposition that Life is not a distinction of the organic world, but is a common property of the whole of Nature, and only made visible to us in the organic, implies, of course, that relations are really existent in the inorganic that do not directly affect our senses ; so that we receive at first a deceptive impression. It gives us the same challenge which the affirmation that motion never ceases gives ; the challenge, in a word, which is the very touchstone of science—to feel in one way and think in another.

But the history of man's thought respecting motion—first assuming it as two, and then learning that it is one—has farther suggestions for us. It is true that in learning that motion does not cease, even on this earth where practically every motion so surely ends, the supposed distinct, and *inferior*, earthly motions are seen to differ only in mode from the heavenly motions, that had been exalted above them. But this is not the whole : we have learnt something



also respecting the heavenly motions which mere observation of them never could have taught us : for motion is not presented to us as we most truly think of it, in the heavens any more than on the earth. Below, we see it under conditions which make it seem not to continue ; above, we see it under conditions which make it seem not to continue in the same straight line. We hold two properties true of motion : that it continues, and that it proceeds always in the same line. Now we nowhere see motion presenting to us *both* these characters. Every straight motion ceases ; every continuous motion is a curve. We always perceive it under conditions which hide from us one or other of these two characters, which yet we unhesitatingly affirm always to belong to it. We always see it, either under resistance which makes it practically cease, or under gravity which makes it practically curved. What man has done is to unite in his thought of Motion at once the not-ending which he perceives in the heavens, and the not-bending which he discovers upon earth : from the two presentations of motion to him (which once he took for granted meant two kinds of motion), he has raised up MOTION : the one everlasting, rectilinear motion that he knows, and which Nature everywhere acknowledges for her own.



I would suggest that the very same lesson is put before us again by the diverse-seeming organic and inorganic world. There is some unity, some truth of Nature—when we know it we shall be sure to call it Life—which is presented to us under these two forms ; neither truly the one Life as it is, but both together giving us the key to it. In the inorganic we miss some characters that it possesses ; in the organic we fail of others. But also each possesses some that the other lacks. The subject cannot be treated yet ; it floats before us but as the misty outline of a distant shore. Yet, even now we may see so much as this : that in the inorganic we seem to discover uniformity, unchangeableness, necessity : in the organic we seem to perceive spontaneity, action, power. Yet in each, as it so appears, something is wanting : the unchangeable necessity seems to reveal no action ; the spontaneous action seems as if changelessness and necessity were absent from it. Each presents to us that which we already begin to know cannot be the truth. Nay, already we have begun, even if unconsciously, to interpret each by the other : especially to discover that in organic things there is no lack of necessity or want of perfect order of causation. So that already there glimmers before our eyes a vision [is it not the vision of the Life that truly is?]—of an action in which also



is necessity ; of a necessity that does not banish action. It is true, we directly perceive it nowhere. Neither do we, nor *can* we, anywhere perceive that to which alone we truly give the name of motion ; but nowhere also do we perceive anything that does not demonstrate and reveal its presence.

But to come to matters of demonstration : if it is proved that the force in organic things, and through the presence of which we call them living, is a force coming from the inorganic world, and returning into it, is there any longer any meaning in affirming that 'Life' is confined to the organic? If it be meant that this force exists in a peculiar mode in the organic, different from any other mode, of course, it is true ; but it is as true of electricity in a wire, or magnetism in an iron bar. The organic force appears to have some special relation to the properties we term chemical, and may—in some respects truly, though doubtless very inadequately—be imagined as being a *resistance* to certain chemical tendencies, which establishes a state of proneness to chemical change. This is like, not unlike, the inorganic. Or, if it be said that the distinction of the organic is not in its force, but in its forms, in the complexity and adaptations of its structures, so manifold in use ; then two things must be remembered : (1) that the name of life is *not* limited



to such adaptations and formations of special structures, but is given quite apart from them—the white of egg is living; and (2) the source of these adaptations of structure that strike us so in the organic world, is exactly the question. Why is not the natural inference true, that they spring from, and express, an equal or superior adaptation, and beauty of structure and order, in the whole universe around, but which we, by the narrow range of our perception, cannot see until it is made visible to us in these smaller wholes? Does our not perceiving a thing prove that it is not present? If our puny lives and capacities did constitute elements in a great living whole, should we be at once perceptive of it? It must be remembered that the burden of the proof lies not on him who says the organic and inorganic worlds are one though differently related to us, but on him who says that they are different.

But it is not necessary to urge reasoning. The evidence that the structure and adaptations of the organic world are determined by demonstrable conditions around them, and so express relations that have their source in the larger Nature, is daily growing more complete. That the forms with all their delicacy are imparted from without, is as evident as that the force that works within them is imparted from



without.<sup>1</sup> If, then, both the force and the forms are given by the world around, what remains to justify the denial of the unity? It is the same fact we see in each.

That there is a natural revulsion from this view I admit. Who among us has not felt it? We hate to reduce all the beauty of life to fortuitous concurrences, and even more, probably, to a mechanical Fate. Nay, I own, the thought is to me ridiculous. I do not understand how one who is assured that no 'matter' and no 'force' ever come to be except through just so much matter and force having been before, can imagine that order and adaptation can come to be, save by order and adaptation having been before. If not-order can make order, why not not-force make force? Is order but an idea? matter and force are the same; alike, both are names for our sensations. Is order a mere condition or mode? force also is but a name for condition. Why is the primary law of the mind, that will not let anything be supposed to begin absolutely *de novo* and of itself, here to be set aside? In no thought can those instincts of our nature which demand some adequate cause for the beauty and wonderfulness of organic

<sup>1</sup> I abstain from details on this point, having discussed it before. See *Life in Nature: On Living Forms*. But reference may be made to Mr. Herbert Spencer's writings on Biology.



life be so fully satisfied as in the thought that accounts it a resultant of the force around ; for this means that all of wonder and of beauty that we can discover in the less is proved also of the greater ; only more still is proved ; such beauty and such adaptation, as should make this little world we call organic—this tiny offshoot—the natural and inevitable expression of its glory.

We let ourselves be befooled by size. Taking *any* view of the organic life, we must conceive the body as made up of molecules ; small particles of carbon and oxygen, &c. Now, I think, no one supposes these minutest molecules themselves to be more living in the organic body than elsewhere. The 'life'—it is the material or physical life we are speaking of—lies in the relation between them. Now, would a creature endowed with reason, and yet small enough to live on one of these molecules and find them of an enormous size, perceive that they were parts of a living whole ? They would be to it mere dead masses ; how would it know that the forces that moved them were the forces of a great Life ? But why should not the molecules of a living body be as large as suns and planets seem to us ? and why should not the dwellers on them have called one of the powers of the Life that rules them—gravity ?



But it may be asked, what reason is there for insisting on the identity of the organic and inorganic? or what use in wresting the term Life thus to a new meaning? There are differences, practically of the greatest amount, between the two: why should not life still denote to us those differences? The reasons to my mind are both obvious and important. First, there is the question of truth. To think of the one world as living and the other as not living—twist or obscure the idea of life as we may—is to think falsely of them; whatever difference it is meant to imply, it is one that has no right to be affirmed, and that therefore distorts our thoughts of each. And (2.) it hinders our knowledge; for two different presentations of one object give us more than doubled powers for rightly understanding it. If the organic and inorganic worlds be truly one, we can by the one interpret the other; in the very fact of their apparent difference they throw on each other a mutual light, each making visible to us characters which in the other are hidden. This advantage is plain in the two apparently contrasted forms of motion; but in the intricate problems alike of physics and of physiology of how much greater service to us were such help! And perhaps it would be a help to us chiefly in the direction in which we are prone least to feel our need of



it; namely, in the interpretation of the inorganic world. For it is at least possible that our feeling here is inverse to the truth, and that instead of understanding best (as we seem to ourselves to do) the inorganic, we understand it least, and therefore feel it to be so much more simple. It is possible that the assurance we feel of knowledge here is the assurance that is the very mark of ignorance; and that nothing so much could prove that we know most—little as that most may be—respecting the organic world, as that we have at least discovered that it is a ‘mysterious’ thing. Suppose we came to feel that the mechanical explanations which had seemed to answer so well for all that was not ‘living,’ were really no more than the mechanical explanations of organic processes by aid of which our predecessors contrived to make themselves content with a false feeling of knowledge? For what have we done, in these explanations of the inorganic, but take one feeling of our own—the feeling of exertion and resistance—and apply it to all outside things as if it contained the sum and substance of their secret? Formulating the facts around us in terms of one of our own sensations—is that real knowledge of *them*? Indeed it is no longer called so.

But all the while there stands beside us the organic



world, pregnant with a fresh significance, introducing new meanings, suggesting quite other reasons, revealing a whole series of relations, and of ends, of which we had no glimpse before. Yet when we turn to study it, it refuses to be found different. On one pedestal after another of special divineness or nobleness, we seek to exalt it ; but it descends from every one in turn, and claims kindred with its lowlier brethren. What does it mean? Is it not simply this : that the organic world is but the part of Nature that we best and most truly know—the part nearest to us, most within our ken? The inorganic is afar off from us ; we can perceive it but through senses which leave upon it each its own impress ; but this throbbing body of our own—we feel it, our very actions are *its* actions ; we know that it is living. If we find, by every test we can apply, that it is one with the other larger world, it teaches us that that larger world is living too. It is not that in the seeming more there is something added, but in the seeming less there is something unperceived.

So, as we have sought, and with so much success, to explore the living body by the aid of the inorganic processes, there awaits us a yet richer study ; the converse : by aid of the organic processes and results to explore the inorganic world. How many hidden,



utterly unlikely, things we have discovered by this method in organic life! why should not hidden and utterly unlikely things reveal themselves, by use of the same method, in the opposite direction? And what could be of more certain use, than if we should prove that *vital* relations—processes, and ends akin to those of our own lives—rule all around us? It were unworthy here to give the reins to fancy; but there is one simple point on which already it is right to dwell. In organic life the processes are *cyclical*; we never see one action without its complement, its opposite. In this respect we see Nature there most truly; and in so far as this character seems absent from the inorganic, there our perception is in fault. The thought of any process as unconformed to this law, and as complete without *that* completeness—of showing us a Cycle—is one which demands to be banished from our minds. In this, all processes are as the vital processes, and by the aid of these we may better learn to see them.

But the chief good to us of learning that the organic and inorganic worlds are one, would be that it would deliver us from the conception of ourselves as exalted above the rest of the universe; endowed with higher prerogatives, and bound therefore by special and higher laws. We wrong *ourselves* when



we deem that the laws Nature obeys are mere mechanical necessities, and therefore unsuitable for us ; they claim from us a study more reverent, more open-eyed. Who took as the type of the true man, the wind ?—the wind that blows where it *likes* ; and of which no man need ask whence or whither ; he may be sure that it is going where it is needed to keep Nature's balance true. Were not the wind's law, law enough for us ?

Our thought of Nature influences all our other thoughts ; nor can we, while that continues false, read aright our own destiny or even our own duty.







*NOTE**TO THE PAPER 'ON A LAW OF HUMAN LIFE.'*

(See p. 33.)

I HAVE said that, in the intellectual life of man, the correction of the premiss is the introduction into our thought of some element unperceived by sense.

We may give perhaps to this fact another form of expression. It has now become customary to say that our perception is modified by 'subjective' elements: that is, that something within us affects our perceiving, and causes that of which we are conscious to be different from that which truly exists. In so far as sense is concerned, we see that this 'subjective element'—or that which is from ourselves—is, that there are things which we do not perceive; or that there is more in that which exists than our perception includes. That is, the 'subjective element' is a non-perception; or, to speak more generally, the subjective element, so far as we have knowledge of its



nature, is a *negative*. The advance from falsity to truth is by a casting out of a negation or of a non-perception : that is, by our coming to perceive more fully. Now there is at least strong probability that, in this instance, of the senses as compared with the reason, there is shown to us the nature of the difference of our perception from the truth in every case : namely, that it differs by a negative—by that which answers to a non-perception. The correction of the premiss, then, we may define as the casting out of a non-perception : and it is effected either by the reason casting off bonds laid on it by the senses, through incomplete perception on their part, or by some process parallel to this.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I do not take into account the assumed introduction of *light* by the eye, or of *sound* by the ear, &c.; because these are by no means established to be subjective. The resolution of colour and sound, and other sensations of our own, into motion, is simply putting the impressions of one sense for those of another ; and is done only because the latter furnishes convenient formulæ for universal application. Expressing all the phenomena of Nature in terms of motion is like reducing incommensurable fractions to a common term ; but it neither is, nor now professes to be, a truer apprehension. Whether our perceptions by ear, eye, taste, smell, &c., or those by touch, be the truer, remains an open question ; and it is evident that those of touch, as involving exertion, whereby alone there comes to us the sensation of *force*, are presumably those which are most modified.



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