

A brief examination of the views of the Veterinary College and of the grounds of their petition presented to the House of Commons.

Contributors

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BRIEF EXAMINATION
OF THE VIEWS
OF THE
VETERINARY COLLEGE

1795

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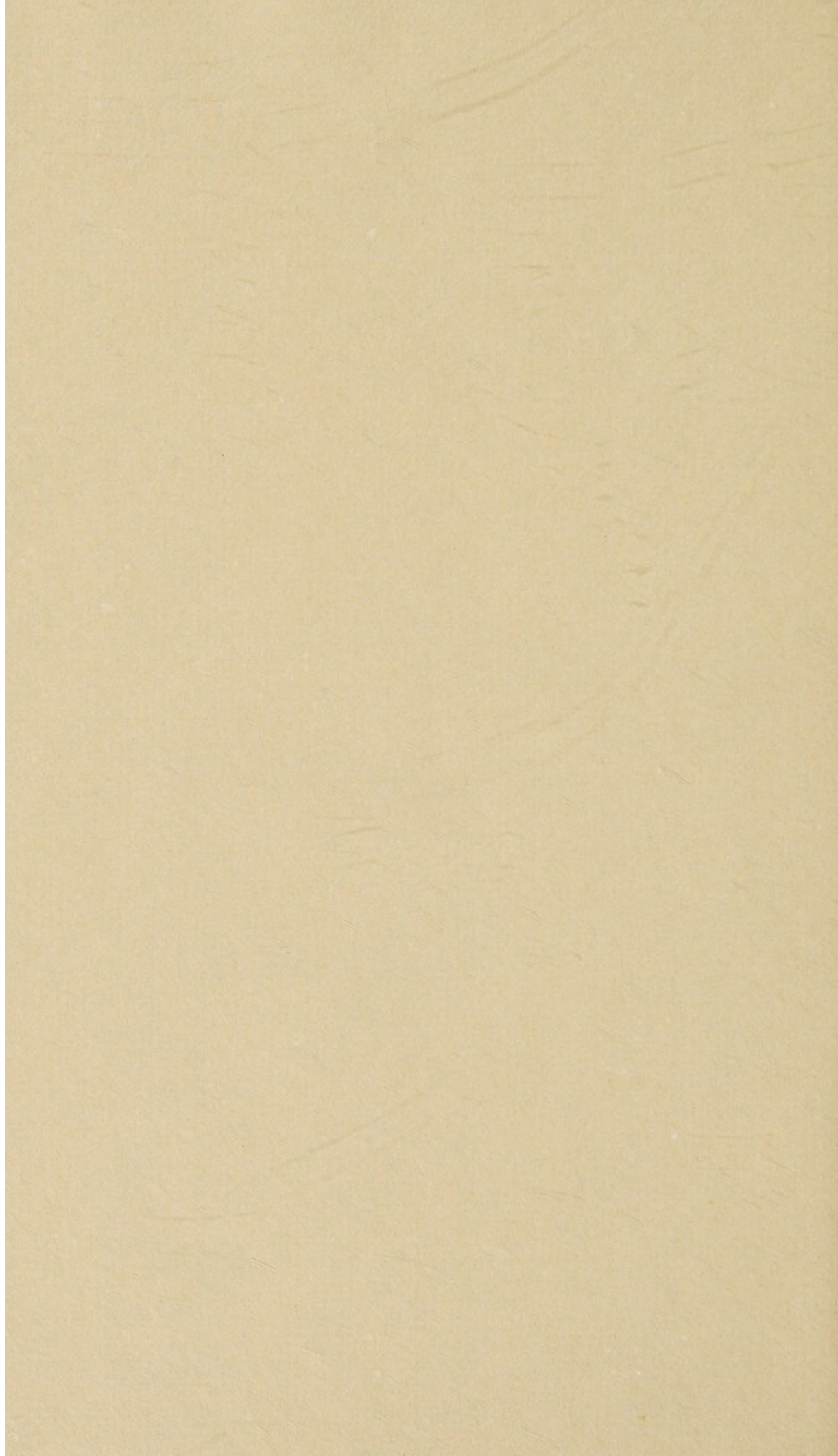




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BRIEF EXAMINATION

OF THE

VIEWS

OF THE

VETERINARY COLLEGE,

AND OF THE

GROUND OF THEIR PETITION

PRESENTED TO THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

DIGNA CERTE RES EST UT HÆC SCIENTIA EMANCI-
PETUR, ET IN SCIENTIAM SEORSUM REDIGATUR.

BACON.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR DEBRETT, PICCADILLY; AND EGERTON,
WHITEHALL, 1795.

V I E W S

VETERINARY COLLEGE

AND OF THE

GROUND OF THEIR EDITION



HOUSE OF COMMONS.

FROM THE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
AND CERTAIN EST OF THE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

LONDON:

•7071 JANETH W

THE Petition of the Veterinary College having been received by the House of Commons and referred to a committee, the friends of that institution will naturally conceive a desire that its views were more generally known; and that it were well understood, how justly they have urged its public service as ground for public consideration. To contribute in a small degree to extend this knowledge, which we sincerely lament no abler advocate has undertaken, it is intended in the following pages to examine very briefly, the views which have uniformly directed the labours of the college from the origin of their association, and the grounds on which they venture to rest their expectation of obtaining a parliamentary support.

The petition prays for the assistance of parliament in consideration of difficulties incurred in the prosecution of a work of great national utility; and it offers to government

in return, what, after calculation, it conceives to be equivalent to the aid for which it applies. If the college is able to make good these allegations, it cannot be deemed unreasonable to cherish very sanguine hopes of their success.

To do full justice to the argument would require more ample bounds than those which we have thought it prudent to prescribe to ourselves for this enquiry; the reasons for which limitation will hereafter be made to appear. To accomplish our end, therefore, we shall be obliged to forego the advantages which might be derived from a more diffuse investigation, and to confine ourselves to a strict and concise statement of the question, and to the principal arguments which it immediately points out. If however, the reader should be disposed to consider these with moderate candour and attention, they will enable him to supply every other deficiency which the present abridged examination is not able to avoid.

Of the facts which ground the petition, namely, the present state of the college finances, the public interest concerned in their exertions, and the value of the equivalent they offer, it is our intention only to consider
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the two latter, the first not properly coming within the scheme of our enquiry. Of these, we shall direct our examination chiefly to the former, which has been contested in a general manner by some, but a very short view of the object of the institution, will plainly discover to us with what justice this doubt has been entertained.

To do this as concisely as it is possible, we shall observe that the professed object of the veterinary college is, "the improvement of farriery." In professing which, two things are supposed; first, that farriery is, from its nature, deserving of the pains which the college is taking to improve it; and, secondly, that its condition is, by circumstances, such as to require the improvement intended.

In order to ascertain how far the first supposition is true, it will be necessary to consider what the subject is whose merit is therein assumed. The word farriery, is a modern corruption of ferriery, which word being derived to us from the words ferrure, and ferrarius, properly implies a trade conversant in the working of iron; and is equivalent to the word smithery. Farriery and smithery are therefore convertible terms.

But as smithery is certainly not the art whose improvement is pursued by the college with so much ardour and expence, we are next to enquire what other art there is, included within this term; and we shall find, that custom, whose influence on the association of ideas is so extensive, has for ages committed diseased cattle to the care of smiths; and that from this custom, the term of farriery, which in strictness denotes only the working in iron, has been extended to embrace a branch of medical practice, known to science by the appellation of *ars veterinaria*, or veterinary medicine. It is this practice, so foreign to the term that has engrossed it, which forms the proper object of the veterinary college; but which, in consideration of the prejudices of the day, it still continues to express by the generally received name of farriery. The progress of our examination, however, requires that we should consider its nature under its more scientific designation of veterinary medicine; and we shall observe, that veterinary medicine is defined to be “that *part of medicine* which concerns the diseases incident to brutes.”* From whence it follows that its

* James's Medical Dictionary.

merits rest on the double ground, of the general merits of medicine, and, of the value of the animals which form the proper subject of this particular branch. For, if it be granted that medicine itself is an art of real utility, as being the art of preserving or restoring health; and if it be also granted, that the several kinds of our cattle are objects deserving every assistance which this art is able to contribute for their preservation in health, or their restoration when diseased; it should seem, that there can remain no ground for questioning the value of veterinary medicine, nor consequently for contesting the utility of the exertions which have been made in order to obtain its more effectual cultivation.

From this compressed view of the argument it may fairly be inferred, that they who do contest this utility, have not taken the pains necessary for informing themselves of the question on which they hazard a decision; and that their opinion is determined previously to obtaining that knowledge of the circumstances, which is absolutely essential for forming a just one.

But, as we have just seen that the claims of veterinary medicine are laid on no less foundations than those of universal medicine, and
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the commercial importance of cattle of every denomination, it will be necessary for those who take upon them to decry this art to prove, either that medicine has no reasonable pretensions to the estimation of mankind, nor to the public support it meets with in every enlightened country ; or, if they do not chuse to hazard this argument, to prove that cattle are objects too insignificant, and unworthy the interference of public authority for the care and preservation of their health. But in order to make good this latter proposition, if any can be so ill informed as to advance it, it will be necessary for them to controvert the daily experience of commercial society, and to disprove the facts which establish this positive truth, that a very principal part of the national wealth, and of the public resources, consists in the cattle of the country. If, therefore, this is not alledged, and if those who would oppose the public sanction being extended to the cultivation of veterinary medicine, do so upon neither of these two grounds, there remains only this ; that we are well enough as we are, and that ordinary farriery is sufficient in all the occasions in which we are used to recur to it. This we suspect

suspect to be the sentiment of those who, in a general way, disparage veterinary medicine, and who would depreciate the laudable efforts which have been made in order to extend its utility. But if farriery is alledged to be sufficient in its present state for all cases, this sufficiency must respect, either the capacity of the art, or the value of the subject; and we are to understand, either that farriery subsists at present in so complete a state as to satisfy every demand that the calamities incident to cattle can make upon the art of medicine; or, we are to understand, that cattle are to be so rated that, all things considered, the present condition of farriery with all its acknowledged defects is good enough for them; consequently, that any measures taken for the purpose of improving it would be idle and superfluous. The former can hardly be intended by any one who reflects before he speaks; nor indeed by any but such as require to be told, that farriery, however practised, is a department of medicine, resting on the same common principles, and working to the same end; and that consequently, as far as farriery is depressed below the level of medical science, so far it is defective, and of course not sufficient

cient to correspond with the demands which may be made on it. It remains, then, that we are so to rate our cattle that common farriery is to be held good enough for their use under every exigency. But how replete is this proposition with contradictions and absurdities ! If it be true that our anxieties ought ever to be regulated by the real importance of the objects which excite them, it is reciprocally true, that all objects ought to excite in us a concern and anxiety proportioned to their value. If we were to take an estimation of cattle by a moral scale, and only in reference to the superior nature of man, such a notion might possibly be admitted ; but in a commercial point of view, and as a constituent part of the national wealth, cattle have a fixed and definite value ; and to maintain their value unimpaired, and thus prevent them from becoming defaulters to the state, is an object not only of political oeconomy but of common sense. The means of maintaining their value, resides almost entirely in the art of preserving or restoring their health. In proportion as they become unable to render to the state the service which it requires of them, their value is impaired, and the state sustains
a loss ;

a loss; on the other hand, in proportion as they are in a condition to answer those demands, their value is preserved, and the state is benefited. Every domestic animal may be considered as a debtor to the public. “ The annual labour of every nation is the
 “ fund which originally supplies it with all
 “ the necessaries and conveniences of life
 “ which it annually consumes.” From this common stock it is that every living animal must feed; it must consume a portion of the fruits of that labour by which we are all to subsist. That this consumption may not become a plunder, it must render back to the state the value of what it consumes. If this is not done, the stock is defrauded, and the loss is irremediable; and this loss taken in any one instance, and multiplied by the number of all such defaulters, exhibits a considerable debt due to the public. In order, then, that this may not be the case, it is necessary for those to whom they belong to possess, and it is incumbent on the public to provide, the best means for preserving them in health; or if their health should be in any manner impaired, the best and most expeditious means for restoring it. To do this is a work de-

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manding equal knowledge and judgment; and which constitutes the proper province of veterinary medicine; on which account we may venture to subjoin to the ordinary definition of that art, this additional and honourable character, that it is the art of preserving or restoring the commercial value of cattle.

The misapprehension which so often discovers itself respecting the nature of this art, will excuse a few remarks on the nature of medicine in general. Medicine, we all know, is the art of preserving or restoring health; but we do not seem to be equally aware that its proper and immediate object is the *animal* frame generally, whether it exist simply, as in the brute creation, or united with intellect as in man; like all other common provisions of nature, its principles respect all her animal productions; to use the language of natural law, it is “Non humani generis proprium, “ sed omnium animalium quæ in cœlo, quæ “ in terrâ, quæ in mari nascuntur.”* We have been so long accustomed to exclude the animal kingdom from the benefits of scientific medicine, that we are ready to believe that

* Just. Institutes.

the ground of this exclusion is laid in nature, when in fact it originates in the narrowness of our own views, and the indolence of our habits. In remote times a juster conception of the subject seems to have prevailed. The most eminent of our modern physicians have indeed unguardedly defined medicine in its wider extent to be the art of preserving in health, and curing when diseased, the *human* body;* but the great father of their art, with far more accuracy and truth defines it generally, as “the art of removing diseases from diseased bodies.”† And an elegant poet and curious observer of the phænomena of nature views them all under the same bond of union;

“ Nunc ratio quæ sit morbis, aut unde repente
Mortiferam possit cladem conflare coorta
Morbida vis hominum generi pecudumque catervis,
Expeditam.”

LUCRET.

So that on whatever subject it is employed, it is the same art, grounded upon the same general principles; and whether the system whose derangements it endeavours to repair,

* Boerhaave and Cullen.

† Hippocrates.

be moved by instinct or by reason, it has no certain means of doing it without a knowledge of its laws, and of the conformation of its several parts. In the extent and exactness of this knowledge consists the superiority of medicine at the present day over the condition of the same art during the dark ages which preceded the revival of learning; and farriery must submit to undergo a similar revolution before it can be equal to the discharge of the office which it has so long continued to engross.

Some have hastily concluded the futility of the art from its inefficacy in the hands of farriers. The ignorance of these has induced a belief that the art at best is weak and precarious; and an ignorance of its merits has been taken as evidence for a real defect of all merit. But how unworthy is this judgment; “Non fuit artis ista, sed hominum.” It is equally absurd as it is illiberal to extend that condemnation to the art, which is due only to the ignorant practitioner,

But, it may be asked, how are we to acquire the knowledge of which we confess ourselves to be in want? Let us, in reply, demand whence the knowledge was obtained

tained which effected the improvement of medicine at a period when the whole of that art was no better than farriery? The same application and industry which brought forward medicine from that condition is surely equal to producing a corresponding effect in favour of veterinary medicine. Truth readily exhibits itself to the sincere enquirer; and, as a sense of the imperfections of medicine at the period to which we allude, was the motive which directed men of judgment to seek its improvement, and as attentive study was the only means which enabled them to effect it, it is obvious, that the same motive and the same means are all that is now required to put us in possession of the knowledge of which we stand in need. But besides these, we possess two other resources which medicine did not enjoy. We have to begin our work in the day, whereas medicine was obliged to institute hers in a twilight little advanced from perfect night. The mass of light which medical research has gradually collected from every part of nature, prevents the possibility of error in the progress we are to make; and the labours of the several continental veterinary schools during the last
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thirty years render that progress still easier, by having already opened and prepared a path in which we may leisurely proceed.

We do not intend to press this argument any further, having, as we hope, made it to appear satisfactorily, that veterinary medicine is an object entitled to the public attention; and we shall terminate this part of the enquiry, by producing the sentiments of a few able judges, in confirmation of what has been said. Not because we consider authority as necessary in all cases for enforcing argument, but, because the present subject seems peculiarly authorised by its novelty, to call in to its support the judgment given at different times in its favour, by those who have taken the most pains to consider it.

The great Mr. Boyle speaks thus; “ The
 “ skilfullest physicians might without dispa-
 “ ragement to their profession do it an useful
 “ piece of service, if they would be pleased
 “ to *collect and digest* all the approved experi-
 “ ments and practices of farriers, graziers,
 “ butchers and the like, which the ancients
 “ did not despise, but honoured with the
 “ titles of *hippiatrica* and *veterinaria*; and
 “ among which, if I had leisure, divers
 “ things

“ things may be taken notice of, which might
 “ serve to illustrate the *methodus medendi*.”
 Before the establishment of the schools of
 France, the eminent M. de Buffon thus ex-
 pressed himself; “Je ne puis terminer l’histoire
 “ du cheval sans marquer quelques regrets
 “ de ce que la santé de cet animal utile et
 “ précieux a été jusqu’ à présent abandonnée
 “ aux soins et à la pratique, souvent aveugle,
 “ des gens sans connoissance et sans let-
 “ tres. La médecine que les anciens ont
 “ appelée médecine vétérinaire n’est presque
 “ connue que de nom ; je suis persuadé que
 “ si quelque médecin tournoit ses vues de ce
 “ côté là, et faisait de cet étude son principal
 “ objet, il en feroit bientôt dédommagé par
 “ d’amples succès ; que non seulement il
 “ s’enrichiroit, mais même qu’au lieu de se
 “ dégrader, il s’illustreroit beaucoup,” &c.
 Our ingenious Mr. Mills, in his valuable
 treatise on cattle, has the following remark.
 “ Next to man, cattle are justly entitled to
 “ our tenderness and care, in return for the
 “ essential benefits we receive from them.
 “ —This naturally leads me to regret, that
 “ we have not in this country some institu-
 “ tion like that of the veterinarian school at
 “ Lyons,

“ Lyons, which is, by royal authority, un-
 “ der the inspection of a very able surgeon
 “ and good physician, M. Bourgelat, of whose
 “ superior intelligence the reader will find re-
 “ peated proofs in this work. Humanity is
 “ shocked at the barbarity and ignorance of
 “ the generality of farriers, and it were greatly
 “ to be wished that men of education and skill
 “ would not think the healing of cattle an
 “ object beneath their notice. Almost every
 “ nation in Europe now sends pupils to the
 “ royal veterinarian school at Lyons.”
 “ Every country in Europe,” says Mr. Arthur
 Young, “ *except England*; a strange excep-
 “ tion, considering how grossly ignorant our
 “ farriers are.”* In a publication of the year
 1765 the author thus speaks. “ It often
 “ astonishes me that among the many lauda-
 “ ble premiums offered by the society of
 “ which we are members, there should be
 “ none for the discovery of remedies for the
 “ several disorders to which all kind of cattle
 “ are subject. Nothing could be more use-
 “ ful; nothing could be more easily ascer-
 “ tained than their efficacy.—If any remedy

* Tour through France.

“ could be found out that would cure 15
 “ horses out of 20, it would be of infinite
 “ use ; for the farriers, or horse-doctors, as
 “ they are sometimes called, are generally
 “ not only very ignorant but very imposing.”*

This universal concurrence in opinion, at length produced those noble establishments which of late years have taken place in different parts of Europe ; the founders of which are thus celebrated by an able and distinguished professor. “ *Gloriosum principibus atque nobis erit ad posteros, nunc tandem, tertiâ hujus seculi parte, homines conservandis pecoribus studere. Ludovicus XV. Maria Theresâ, Josephus II. et Christianus VII. publicæ suorum regnorum felicitatis statores celebrentur, quoniam domesticorum quoque animantium sanitati prospectum voluere. Regimini horum Europæ principum primos artis veterinariæ magistros debemus : ad illorum usque tempora dextero veterinario pecora carebant.*”† An experience of the advantages accruing to the public from these institutions, drew the following

* *Museum Rusticum.* † *Wolfstein, M. D. Veterinary Professor in the Imperial school at Vienna.*

observation from an ingenious French writer
 on several subjects of agriculture. “ C’est
 “ principalement dans l’établissement des éco-
 “ les vétérinaires, que brille la sagesse des
 “ vues du gouvernement. Accroître les con-
 “ noissances des hommes sur les animaux
 “ compagnons de leur travaux et de leur cul-
 “ ture, c’est multiplier leur ressource et dou-
 “ bler leurs richesses : aussi l’art vétérinaire
 “ étoit fort considéré chez les anciens, et il
 “ étoit exercé par les médecins, dont la sci-
 “ ence profonde embrassoit tout le regne ani-
 “ mal. On peut voir dans les livres de Ca-
 “ ton, de Varron, de Columelle, et de Pline,
 “ jusqu’ où les anciens avoient porté la con-
 “ noissance de cet art. La chute de l’empire
 “ Romain entraîna celle de toutes les scien-
 “ ces ; ce n’est que de nos jours, que le ce-
 “ lebre M. Bourgelat a créé, pour ainsi dire,
 “ l’hippiatrique et l’art vétérinaire. Les
 “ progrès que les élèves ont fait en si peu de
 “ temps dans les deux écoles établies à Lyon
 “ et à Alfort, prouvent sans réplique, l’utilité
 “ de l’instruction dans les dernières classes du
 “ peuple ; et le secours que les provinces re-
 “ tirent journellement de ces écoles, pour
 “ garantir leurs bestiaux des maladies conta-
 “ gieuses,

“ gieufes, a dédommagé amplement le mi-
 “ niftère des dépenses qu’il a été obligé de
 “ faire pour ces beaux établiftemens, dont
 “ l’avantage fe fera encore mieux fentir par
 “ la fuite. Le bien qu’a opéré l’école de Ly-
 “ on, a pénétré jufque dans les provinces
 “ voifines, en caufant le retabliffement des
 “ haras en Bourgogne, où l’on s’occupe effen-
 “ tiellement des moyens de rétablir les efpe-
 “ ces dégénérées de nos beftiaux.”*

In a plan for reforming the ftate of the
 profeflion of medicine in France, prefented
 for the fanktion of government in the year
 1790, by the faculty of Paris, the wifeft at-
 tention is paid to veterinary medicine. They
 confider it as an effential member of their
 fyftem. And they introduce this fubject,
 which forms the fourth part of their plan, in
 thefe words. “ La médecine vétérinaire
 “ cultivée par les anciens, a été long-temps
 “ négligée par les modernes. C’eft à ce fi-
 “ ècle qu’appartient l’honneur d’avoir rétabli
 “ ce genre de médecine, digne à tous égards
 “ de l’attention des légiflateurs et de l’étude
 “ des philofophes. Nous dirons encore :

* Anologie. Preface p. xiii.

“ pourquoi féparer la médecine des animaux
 “ de celle de l’homme ? Ne font-ce pas les
 “ mêmes principes à appliquer ? et pour
 “ connoître en quoi ces deux parties de la
 “ même science fe reffemblent ou différent,
 “ ne faut il pas qu’on les rapproche ? ” *

While every other country in Europe was moved by the example of thefe fchools to promote the cultivation of this branch of medicine, the only effect it produced in England was a refolution entered into by the Odiham agricultural fociety, to fend two pupils every year to ftudy in the fchools of France. This refolution, however, was never reduced to practice ; but it nevertheless remained upon their books an honourable testimony of their candour and difcernment. The “ Plan ” prefented to the public in the year 1790 by the late profeflor M. St. Bel, which boldly fuggeded at once, the advantage and facility, of originating a fchool in England, diverted the views of that fociety into another channel, and obtained their hearty concurrence ; and the approbation of the numerous fubfcribers

* Nouveau plan de conftitution pour la médecine en France, &c. 1790.

which

which followed, occasioned that plan, with some alterations, to be finally adopted.

We proceed now to examine, in the second place, whether the present condition of farriery is such as to require the improvement intended. In proof of which little can be required, as we have already shewn, that farriery is nothing more nor less than an imperfect and debased condition of that art, whose perfect character has been represented under the name of veterinary medicine. That such a condition will admit of improvement, is manifest; that its improvement is further desirable, and worthy of the publick's concern, will be equally manifest, when to the proofs we have already adduced, that veterinary medicine is an art capable of contributing to the public prosperity, others are added shewing, that farriery is a practice as certainly occasioning a specific public loss. Its very aspect betrays the truth of this; and evinces, that in proportion as it is unproductive of good, it is productive of positive evil.

Farriery, like every other art or practice, pursues a particular end by particular means. If the means which it employs in order to obtain its end are ineffectual, a failure will be the consequence; but if while the means are incapable

incapable of producing a good effect, they are capable of producing an evil one, the consequence will be a positive mischief. The end which farriery proposes to itself is the cure of animals, whose health is impaired by any internal cause, or by any external accident; and the means which it employs in order to accomplish its purpose are extremely active and subtile, and such as cannot be employed at all without being followed by some event, good or bad. To be able to determine the event, or in any degree to command the issue, it is necessary to know the nature and quality of the agents it employs, and the corresponding quality or circumstances in the subject which call for such employment. Without this knowledge, (and the reader needs not to be informed whether farriery possesses it) it is no longer a work of calculation but of chance; and the chances being infinitely in favour of a pernicious issue, such a method of proceeding leads in the end to a certain loss. The loss in any one instance being considerable, and these instances being constant and systematic, the sum of them becomes a serious calamity. And as, though they separately and immediately affect individuals only yet, they bear collectively and ultimately

ultimately upon the public, to endeavour to diminish the frequency of their recurrence is in every respect an object worthy the intervention of the legislature.

They who suppose farriery to be competent to the province it assumes, and who are of opinion that we require no better service in all cases wherein it is resorted to, have certainly but little considered the subject; they cannot have reflected, that it assumes the practice of medicine without possessing the knowledge of any one principle by which that practice ought to be conducted. That besides an ample stock of medical knowledge, it demands a very particular degree of penetration to be able to surmount the difficulties which, in this branch of medicine, occur at every moment from the muteness of the patients. That this penetration is in itself of no use, unless accompanied with the fruits of diligent study and long observation. That without these, the powerful instruments which medicine employs, drugs and mixtures, the knife and the cautery, are not less dangerous than weapons in the hands of infants. That the mistake of a symptom is alone sufficient to convert a remedy into a poison; and yet, that
without

without an exact knowledge of symptoms it is impossible to discover the latent evil, of which the symptom is nature's indication. That the administration of medicines is the wildest of all experiments where their nature and properties are unknown; and that surgical operations are of all the most hazardous, where the laws and construction of the machine, and the distribution of the vital parts, are not perfectly ascertained. That even experience, that boasted term, is only good or bad as circumstances determine its quality; and that experience, when pleaded by ignorance, is but another name for inveterate error. So that veterinary medicine, although proved to be indispensably necessary to an opulent and commercial country, is yet, when destitute of principles of science, sound experience, and acute observation, and reduced to the state of farriery, wholly inadequate to the task which it undertakes with so much confidence and self-sufficiency. In its present condition amongst us it is no better than a mechanical routine, and the persons who exercise it act by no more intelligent rule, than antient usage and hereditary receipts. To assign a reason for the course they prescribe,

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or to explain the nature either of the disorder or the remedy, makes no part of their engagements. And although one or two have of late endeavoured to raise themselves over the heads of their colleagues by attempting to ingraft a little of human surgery on the lifeless stock of farriery, and by introducing a jargon of hard and barbarous words, they have only brought to a full, experimental proof, the truth of what has been here advanced, by shewing the impotence of farriery to its own restoration, and making it evident, that no temporising measures, nor any thing short of a radical cure, can correct the evil of which we complain; and that farriery must be entirely regenerated before the benefit we seek from it can possibly be obtained. In short, that it must be expunged for the same reason that astrology, alchemy, and magic were dismissed from the notice of enlightened society, and for the same reason also, why some antient sects in medicine were deserted and perished; “*quia necesse erat in ea (medicina sc.) litteras scire.*” Because, says Pliny, it required some degree of education to practise any part of medicine.

It has happened, that the long continuance

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of

of farriery and its coeval ignorance have induced the public into the belief, that no knowledge is required for exercising the art. From the actual want of knowledge in the profession, it seems to have been inferred by a whimsical logic, that no knowledge is wanted by those who are to profess it, and by an easy consequence it has been further assumed, that every person is therefore competent to the practice of farriery. To those who admit this reasoning, or join in the conclusion, we have nothing to offer, but to all others we shall venture to recommend a fair and deliberate examination of the question. This innate capacity for exercising the art of cure, is undoubtedly the belief of almost all grooms and stable-men under the present system; and, which is more remarkable, their masters appear to accede to this opinion with the most unparalleled compliance. So intirely is the master forgotten in the stables, that a groom considers it as much his duty and his right to medicate his master's horses as to deal them out their corn. But who, though he may be obliged to submit to the custom, will venture to defend the principle? Who, that has either reflected on the
fact

fact or experienced the consequences, but has lamented the misfortune? The complaint is indeed of very long standing, and has subsisted in almost all times and in every country. In our own we find it uniformly expressed by all agricultural writers, from the earliest to those of the present day. Fitzherbert, chief justice in the time of Henry the Eighth, gives us the character of the farriers of his days in a few quaint but expressive words. Having described the “ horse mayster and corser,” he adds; “ the horse-leche is he that *takethe uppon hym* to cure and mende all maner of diseases and foraunce that horses have. And when these three be mette, if ye hadde a potycarye to make the fourthe, ye myghte have suche foure that it were harde to truste the best of them.” “ It were also convenyent (he proceeds) to shew medicynes and remedyes for all these diseases and forances; but it wolde be to longe a proceffe at this tyme.—And also, the horse-leches wolde not be content therewith, for it myghte fortune to hurte or hynder theyr occupation.” * With

* Boke of Husbandry.

him agrees, at this distant period of time, the general experience of the public, as it is represented in an excellent work. “ The practice of this useful art has been hitherto almost entirely confined to a set of men, who are totally ignorant of anatomy and the general principles of medicine. It is not therefore surprising that their prescriptions should be equally absurd as the reasons they give for administering them. We cannot indeed expect that farriers, who are almost universally illiterate men, should make a real progress in their profession. They prescribe draughts, they rowel, cauterize, &c. without being able to give any other reason for their practice, but because their fathers did so before them: How can such men deduce the cause of a disease from its symptoms, or form a rational method of cure; when they are equally ignorant of the causes of diseases and the operation of medicines.”*

The state of the British cavalry, which the returns of horses, dead and cast, and the qualifications of the army farriers, enable us

* Encyclopædia Britannica.

to ascertain, brings this argument to an easy conclusion; and furnishes us with a convenient proof, that the loss which the country sustains in the horses of the army is very considerable, and further, that a material part of this loss is occasioned by the want of knowledge and skill in those to whom the care of their health is confided. The returns from the different regiments establish the quantum of loss; and the remarkable instances of success whenever persons of medical science have descended to undertake their cure, especially in cases of gun shot or other wounds which absolutely demand surgical knowledge, confirms the saving which would be made by appointing such persons only to the care of the diseased horses.

From this ignorance of the farriers, and the increased mortality occasioned by it, there results to the public the necessity of keeping up a stock in order to supply these losses, considerably greater than would be the case were the losses fewer. And this increased stock, by consuming what would otherwise be converted into corn or pasture for the sustenance of man, contributes to raise the price of the common necessaries of life. As far then as this excess

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is occasioned by deaths owing to the want of sufficient medical assistance, so far the loss is wholly chargeable on the imperfection of farriery. This, as computed by some distinguished officers of cavalry, amounts in the army nearly to one third of the horses which die, either at home or on service; each of which costing government 25*l.* the loss is easily computed.* When, therefore, the college offer to government to supply the army with farriers, duly instructed and accredited, at the rate of a farrier for every regiment, and to keep up this supply by providing a seminary of such students for the service of the army, it is certainly no rash assertion to say, that they offer what in the end will fully compensate for the temporary aid for which they apply.

A deep sense of these undeniable truths, of the extreme importance of our cattle, of the necessity of possessing the best medical assistance for their preservation, and the palpable

* The loss in horses, dead and cast, in the last few months, in one department of the army only, and that within the island of Great Britain, deserves the most serious attention from government; and furnishes the best test for trying the justness of our reasoning.

inability of farriery for providing it, was the motive which actuated the original institutors of the veterinary college. Their exertions were soon honoured by the public applause; and subscribers multiplied to the number of several hundreds, among whom were many of the most illustrious persons in the nation. The college itself, the buildings already erected, the plan laid down for the completion of the edifice, the spacious infirmary, &c. remain an honourable monument of the extent of their views, and of the wisdom of their measures.

The institution thus established, was designed to seek its object principally by two methods; first by providing a seminary in which farriery might be studied as a branch of medicine, and be grounded on a basis of science. Secondly, by taking proper steps for collecting, or, if we may so express ourselves, for funding the variety of loose and floating knowledge which the experiments of ingenious persons may have brought out, but which, subsisting now as distinct and solitary truths, belonging to no system, and cognizable by no department either of œconomy or science,

science, hold but a precarious existence, perishing in all probability with their authors.

In order to accomplish more effectually the former design, a spacious infirmary was annexed to the school, the direct and primary object of which was, to bring together into one place an extensive body of practice for the fuller instruction of the students, that they might possess the same means and opportunities for perfecting themselves in their line, which are open to the different medical students in the hospitals of the metropolis. The benefit which the subscribers were to derive from sending their horses to the infirmary was a secondary consideration, and a consequence of the arrangement made for providing a practical school for the students of the college.

Such is the plan which the college have uniformly pursued for the space of four years, and with extraordinary perseverance have brought forward to that stage in which they now present it to parliament, to obtain completion and permanency.

The reader who shall have taken the trouble to accompany us thus far in our enquiry, will without doubt be much surpris'd that England
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land should have been so tardy in obtaining an institution of this nature, that in every other instance is so forward to promote the interests of science, and whose own commercial interests are in every other respect managed with a dexterity and success that command the admiration of the civilized world. There is indeed occasion for a just surprise; nor has it escaped the observation of our neighbours on the continent. Every other nation, those especially which cultivate much cattle, or maintain a numerous cavalry, have long since applied themselves with serious attention to this important object; all prejudices have been dismissed; and veterinary medicine has been finally inflated in the dignity of science. The benefits accruing from this change have been sensibly experienced. Contagious diseases have become less frequent and less virulent since medical science has been employed to reduce them. Accidental evils of various kinds have become less calamitous, since the practice of an enlightened surgery has attended the cavalry into the field, or been distributed among the farms. Such is also the benefit which we are to expect from the success of our institution; and although much

of the administration of medicines must still be every where left to herdsmen and stablemen, yet the improved modes of treatment which the college will from time to time point out, will render their practice more simple and secure. The diffusion of science cannot fail by degrees to dissipate error; and there cannot be a doubt that the practice even of old women has improved since the improvement of medicine; and that bark, rhubarb, and magnesia, have taken the place of many complex and barbarous mixtures, which formerly served to swell out the family receipt-book.

Proofs of this have even already begun to display themselves. Several pupils who have passed examinations with credit, and are now settled in different parts of the kingdom, have extended the reputation of the seminary in which they prosecuted their studies, and are receiving the honour, no less than the profit, which is due to superior attainments.

We have now taken a general survey of the grounds on which the veterinary college have rested the merits of their petition, and of the reasons which lead them to hope for a favourable consideration on the part of parliament.

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And it is no slight addition to these reasons, that parliament has so recently established a board of agriculture on principles in many respects the same with those of their institution. In this board the veterinary college may confidently hope to find a body of powerful advocates, as being indispensably necessary for the accomplishment of their views. Whenever their labours shall begin to be directed to that part of agriculture which regards the œconomy of cattle, they will be sensible of the necessity of promoting the cultivation of that art, which the veterinary college has peculiarly adopted; and it surely needs not to be observed, that it will be far more beneficial, as well as wise, to bring this institution to its perfection by a small exertion, than hereafter to be obliged to lay the foundation of it anew.

Much more remains to be said upon this interesting subject; and such is its novelty and importance, that it is extremely difficult to compress into a small compass the arguments by which it is to be supported, without impairing their force and diminishing its consequence. Fearful, however, that a more extended treatise might not obtain such ready attention,

attention, we have ventured to present this brief view of the question for the satisfaction of those who are willing to inform themselves of its merits. And we conclude by earnestly conjuring those who are members of the legislature, to give it a full and candid consideration before they pronounce a judgment against it ; and not, by an hasty decision, run the hazard of extinguishing a work of demonstrated utility, and so render nugatory the disinterested and honourable labours by which it has been effected.

F I N I S.

