

**Modern maladies and present state of medicine. The Anniversary Oration, delivered March 9, 1818, before the Medical Society of London / By D. Uwins.**

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signature*

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AND  
PRESENT STATE OF MEDICINE.

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AND  
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THE  
ANNIVERSARY ORATION,  
DELIVERED MARCH 9, 1818,  
BEFORE  
THE MEDICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON.

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BY D. UWINS, M. D.  
*Member of the London College of Physicians, and one of the Secretaries  
of the Society.*

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PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE SOCIETY.

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“ Neque addicta alterutri opinioni, neque ab utraque nimium  
abhorrentia.” — CELSUS.

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1818.



MODERN MALADIES

AND

PRESENT STATE OF MEDICINE

ANNUARY ORATION

DELIVERED MARCH 9, 1818

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TO THE  
**PRESIDENT, COUNCIL, & FELLOWS**  
OF THE  
MEDICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON,  
THE FOLLOWING  
**ORATION,**  
PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,  
IS  
RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,  
BY THEIR OBEDIENT SERVANT,  
**THE AUTHOR.**

THAVIES INN,  
*April 4th, 1818.*



ADDRESSES  
TO THE  
PRESIDENT, COUNCIL, & FELLOWS

OF THE

MEDICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON.

ORATION.

DELIVERED AT THEIR REQUEST.

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

THE AUTHOR.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

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IN committing the following remarks to the press, and presenting them to the public, the writer will not affect to say that he has been induced, strongly against his own inclination and judgment, to comply with the kind request of his respected associates.

On the subject of motives for appearing in print, it would be as well, indeed, for authors to be always silent, since the truth or falsehood of their assertions, in this particular, can never be brought to the test of absolute demonstration: and since, after all, the matter, and not the motive, is the thing which concerns the reader. It may, however, be permitted the writer to deprecate the idea of having been instigated in the following animadversions by any thing even approaching to personal considerations. He is, on the contrary, proud in being able to call that individual his friend, who is principally and particularly alluded to by name, in the course of



the following strictures ; and he embraces the present opportunity of saying, it portends well for the progress and improvement of medicine, that we witness the multiplication of its professors in all its departments, who are, as in the present instance, endowed with deep penetration, and actuated by strict integrity.

One word on the style of the present pamphlet, which the writer fears may be chargeable with the faults of being at once too lofty, and too low, too flourishing, and too familiar. If such be the feeling of his readers, he must request them to recollect, that those sins against a correct taste, which present themselves in oral communications, are at least more venial than the same crimes committed in regular dissertations. The following address, although originally written, was written for *ex ore* delivery ; and, the writer, publishing by the request of his hearers, is bound to a strict and literal compliance with their commands.

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## ORATION, &c.

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It may seem a singular mode of commencing an anniversary oration to remark, that the appointment to deliver the present discourse has reminded me forcibly of the mixed nature of every earthly good. To state this, however, is merely to state my feelings without disguise or affectation. By calling me, Gentlemen, to this place on this day, you have conferred on me an unmerited honour, of which I shall ever be proud: but the satisfaction of mind with which I obey your summons, is a little clouded by apprehensive anticipations, the existence of which will be readily conceived when the difficulty is adverted to, of being conscientious and firm in the enunciation of opinions, without assuming such an air of decision as



shall render me obnoxious to the charge of dogmatism. This difficulty is, moreover, much magnified, when I contemplate the possibility of there being a shade of difference in sentiment between myself and some of my fellow members of this Society, whom I have every wish and every reason to look up to as authority. If, however, in the course of the remarks which I am now about to submit to your candid attention, in compliance with your kind request, there should be perceived an approach to this diversity of sentiment, it may at least be allowed me to suggest, that the very difference itself may, in some sort, be regarded as a guarantee for the notions I maintain having been duly digested before they could have been permitted to become “ parcel of my own mind ;” since no doctrines, either on speculative or practical points, could be adopted in even the slightest opposition to several members of this Society, whom



the sequel will render it unnecessary to name, without such doctrines having been first minutely investigated and proved, in order to ascertain their legitimacy and truth.

Gentlemen. The uncertainty of medical speculations is a matter of proverbial notoriety: the peculiar nature of medical evidence has, indeed, induced in some minds the abandonment of all scientific principles, and a tendency to rest in a sort of empirical scepticism, under the impression that the more we advance in the knowledge of animate nature, the more are we surrounded with clouds and darkness, which science attempts in vain to penetrate and disperse. Such feelings, however, and such conduct, would rather seem to imply an imbecility of mind, than a superiority of understanding. Nothing is more easy than to be sceptical; and nothing, in some cases, is more reprehensible. Certain it is, that the nature



of medical evidence is not precisely similar to that which is the result of physical investigation, and that it even differs from those truths which attach themselves to ethical and moral researches: but that there are truths in medicine,—that there is a satisfaction to be obtained by cultivating the science,—can only be denied by such individuals as are glad of pretexts and apologies for the indulgence of an indolent disposition. If medical science were certain, say some, the art of healing diseases would be more progressive, and malignant maladies would cease to triumph over professed remedial improvements. But this allegation goes upon the forgetfulness of two particulars, which ought, in all fairness, to be taken into account before any comparison can, with propriety, be instituted between ancient and modern medicine. In the first place then, as in the progress of the arts, and the consequent increase of refinement, man



becomes more artificial, and less independent on external circumstances, he naturally and necessarily becomes in the same ratio more obnoxious to the influence of powers that are adverse to his state of physical well-being; for it is a law of nature, that we cannot enjoy without suffering. Open the springs and sources of pleasurable feeling, and causes creative of painful sensation immediately rush up in a proportionate measure. Multiply and magnify your remedial influences, and you thereby increase the necessity for their agency. An advocate, then, for the principle, that the art of healing is actually in a state of progressive improvement, has only to establish the fact, that the diminution of physical evil at all corresponds with the increased measure in which it is engendered, and he at once fairly discharges himself from the *onus probandi*.

But, further, the different relative



connexion of practitioner and patient, now and formerly, ought to be considered, when these comparisons are suggested between the state of disease and medicine in former periods, and that of the present day. Before the time that the vernacular language constituted a vehicle of medical disquisition, the disputes of the schools were confined to the schools; and the sick, supposing all was going on straightforward and right, placed implicit confidence in the judgment of the physician, and in the power of medicine: but now that all is thrown open to public gaze, and every reader, even of a magazine, has opportunities of witnessing the clashing of accredited authorities, respecting subjects which actually involve the issues of life and death, we cannot wonder at the comparative scepticism which prevails on the extent of medicinal infallibility. Crowds of devotees no longer throng the temples of Esculapius, and



return with their faith confirmed, and their diseases healed. Men, in our days, require to be told the ground of *the hope that is in us*; and thus, as science advances faith recedes, and the operation of medicine is more and more reduced to its abstract, actual, physical effect. But as we find men, so must we treat them—as we meet with the art, so must we practise it: and the comparative difficulty and complication of our present professional undertakings ought to excite industry, rather than repress exertion. Let us, then, my fellow-labourers in the same vineyard, not be scared from our duty by the ridicule of the faithless, or be induced to bury our talents in the anticipation of a hard account, but continue to work, in despite of difficulties, with the laudable hope of eventual reward.

Were it nothing but the satisfaction which the mind feels in the progressive development of physical truth, even



admitting that we cannot always turn such truth in medicine to a practical account, the research itself would bring with it its own recompense. Could it, for example, be established, as some have falsely endeavoured to prove, that all the control the practitioner possesses over sabulous and calculary complaints, is confined to the regulation of the digestive states ; and that, therefore, practically considered, a knowledge of the different nature of these concretions is nugatory : even in that case, the man who should have made himself master of the respective varieties of these concretions, would, certainly, at any rate, not prove a *worse* physician than his more easily satisfied contemporary, who should aim at justifying his ignorance by advancing the *cui bono* interrogation, or pleading the inutility of the knowledge in question.

It may appear, Gentlemen, a work of supererogation, to argue before such



an assembly as I have now the honour of addressing, either for the certainty, importance, and improvement in medical science, or the responsibility of the practitioner to cultivate medical philosophy, rather than to launch out upon the shoreless sea of empirical adventure: but, if I may presume to make my own consciousness at all the measure of others' minds, we collectively and individually stand in constant need of repeated calls upon our every exertion: and one motive, I conceive, for the appointment of these annual opportunities, is for the purpose of that mutual excitement which the *esprit de corps* calls forth into effect. Of this respectable and learned body it is needless to say, that I am but an humble and distant member; but I would do my best to act consentaneously with all its other larger and more important members, for the purpose of



preserving the whole in exercise and health.

But, not to occupy any more of your time in introductory matter, I shall now immediately proceed to the particular business of the present address, namely, to express my unbiassed sentiments on the state both of speculative and practical medicine; for certain it is, that even in this our day, we have actual, if not avowed schools of medical theory, and of theory which is still, perhaps, more influential upon practice than those which were formerly broached in the manner of systematic doctrines.

There is nothing, perhaps, more characteristic of man than a restless desire to pry into causation, which induces an anxious wish to connect, as it were, by one bond of union, the various phenomena that present themselves to his observation: or, as it may be expressed in other words, to deduce general prin-



ciples from particular facts. This analogical deduction constitutes, indeed, the chief business of philosophy, which is very little more than a proper classification and register of facts and appearances : but the mischief is, and always has been, that we are apt to suppose analogy which does not actually exist. The phenomena about which our observation is engaged, “ are received in the light in which *we wish* them to appear, rather than in that in which Nature presents them,” and thus we substitute conception for perception ; and, as a consequence, hypothesis for truth. Before, indeed, the Baconian philosophy had actually marked out the distinctive line between conjecture and inference, man was led by his love of causation to substitute mere abstractions of his fancy for physical realities, and thus thought himself advancing in the path of science, while he was in pursuit of a mere phantom of his own



imagination : hence “ the iteration without improvement,” which Lord Bacon observed and complained of in the science of medicine ; a change of terms without a change of things. These shadowy essences do not so easily satisfy the minds of inquirers, in the present day, as they did in former times : we still, however, tend too much to illegitimate generalization of another kind ; which, in contradistinction to the metaphysical generalities of the ancients, may properly enough be called physical errors. Thus the disputes now run upon the actual changes which the bodily organization undergoes in order to constitute disease ; and, guided by the desire just alluded to, as ingrafted in man’s nature to refer every thing to one ruling principle, pathologists of the present day look into one particular organ or part of the body as the grand medium for the elaboration both of healthy and deranged action. Thus the



head, the stomach, the liver, the blood-vessels, are each put in successive requisition for the purpose of solving the enigma of disease ; all views looking more or less to one, to the exclusion of other principles.

I would class the prevailing theories of the present period under those in the first instance, which attribute every thing to the liver. I would, secondly, observe upon those pathological views of disease, which can discern nothing but through the medium of the digestive organs : and, lastly, I would refer to those principles which seem to exalt the incidental circumstance of vascular irritation too much into the rank of cause, and which, at times, predicate the existence of such irritation, when it is not actually present.

In respect to that theory which regards the liver as the *primum mobile* of every thing of a morbid nature, and the consequent practice founded upon these hepatic views, I have often thought,



that when the mania has fully subsided, our successors will find it difficult to reconcile our boasted freedom from the influence of prevailing doctrines, with our passive and practical acquiescence in that system which hepatism has pronounced to be good, and has commanded the medical world to bow to and obey. Turn up the great lobe of the liver, say the champions of the sect now adverted to, and you will find diseases lying as thick as ants in a mole-hill, which has been disturbed by the sithe of the mower. This is the real Pandora's box, *the origo et causa morborum omnium*; the something which, if you can regulate, you can control disease; if not, disease will bid defiance to all your remedial endeavours. Do you see a child dying with hydrocephalus. What can possibly have produced the derangement, and the approaching death, but something wrong in the liver? Is the disorder *tic dolooureux*, or headach, or



apoplexy, or epilepsy, or madness, or *blindness*, see to it that the liver is in a proper state before you either think of cause, or dream of cure. To what other sources than obstructions in the liver can we attribute those affections which have been referred, but erroneously, to primary disorder in the chest? Does the blood find a difficult transmission through the lungs? such difficulty *must* have been first experienced by the liver. Are there tubercles, or ulcerations, or asthmatic conditions observable in these organs? how can such tubercle, or ulcer, or asthmatic affection, have originated without the liver having planted their seeds, and regulated their growth? Do we find inflammatory conditions, aneurismal dilatations, organic obstructions in the heart and its great blood vessels? Who shall pretend that ossification, that obstruction, that dilatation, can have place, unless through the agency of the liver? Stomach and bowel derange-



ments, would our theorists say, are still more obviously and unequivocally our own. Concede this to us, and at the same time observe how intimately connected such ventricular states are with the origin and decline of many other morbid affections, and the inference must be, that all these maladies are, in reality and effect, hepatic. Rheumatic inflammation, for instance, may or may not be an inflammation seated in membranous fascia: but whether it be, or be not, it is the liver which has transmitted the blood, charged with powers to create the local disturbance. Again, an individual is attacked with what you please to name gout. How frequent it is to observe such attack alternating with states in which the liver is undeniably affected in its functions: ergo, do our hepatic logicians infer, gout is resident in the liver. Multiform and various, to be sure, are the disordered irritations to which the kidneys and connected parts are



obnoxious. The urine, instead of being poured out from its gland of secretion, with all its healthy products and principles, is sometimes found loaded with a vast proportion of saccharine matter: but it is needless to amuse yourself with fine spun theories of the *quo-modo* of such phenomenon: it is further loss of time to aim at ascertaining the different qualities and ingredients of calculary formation, or try to find out the *modus operandi* of lithic concretion;—it is all, all done by the liver; and looking at any thing less than the liver, we merely investigate incidental effects, instead of being more sensibly and more profitably engaged in raising our contemplation to the source of every thing.

Have I, Gentlemen, drawn a caricature portrait of this great liver leviathan? Certain it is, that I have not so far disfigured the likeness in the delineation, but that the portrait must be universally recognised; and I shall now draw a little



more upon your indulgence, by saying a few words respecting the origin and prevalence of this hepatic hypothesis.

At the time when the Edinburgh School of Medicine became of paramount authority through the whole of Britain, Dr. Cullen was appointed to the principal medical professorship in that University, and in the system of medicine which he published, proclaimed his partiality to the Hoffmanic doctrine of fibrous debility as explicatory of disordered states: instead, therefore, of vitiated fluids and corrupt humours, formerly the cant of the day, all became now atony and spasm, and tonics, and corroborants. The great rival of Cullen, Dr. John Brown, did very little more than confirm these fibrous notions, although he so very materially altered the language in which they were conveyed; and aimed at simplifying the sources from which the debility proceeded, and the consequent indications of treatment. Eight-tenths



of all the maladies incident to man were in this sweeping code of medical principles referred to sheer weakness or deficient excitation, and all medicine was mere stimulation ; the lancet was denounced as an instrument of destruction, evacuations were proscribed *upon pain of death*, and all organic affections from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, were viewed and treated upon the bold and broad principle of *general excitation*.

It soon, however, became evident that debility and disease are not quite such simple states and requirements as these doctrines taught us to believe, and that local irritations, and organic conditions, demand some cognizance both in pathology and practice. Now then, by a kind of reaction, came into play and repute the visceral notions ; and the only difficulty was to determine what particular organ to fix upon as the root of the evil. The largest, and one of the most important of all the viscera, namely, the



liver, naturally put in its claim for priority of consideration, and was soon voted into the vacant chair. *Hepaticism* henceforth ruled the roast. Peruvian bark, and opium, and steel, and all kinds of tonics and specifics, were pushed far away into the back-ground; and, as we have just seen, whether an infant was dying of water in the head, or an adult was enduring the agonies of gout in the great toe, no other part of the frame excepting the liver had any share or lot in the matter.

But I must hasten to the second head of division above proposed, and am now, therefore, to trouble you with a few remarks upon that system of medicine which I have elsewhere named “a modification of this hepatic mania.” The peculiar views of the principal abettor of this system were occasioned in some measure by the circumstances of hospital practice, and by the contrast which our ingenious and able physiologist observed



between the complaints of local or “ surgical affections,” when the subjects of them were crowded into hospitals, and the same disorders in separate apartments, and in purer air. The foulness of the tongue, the irregularity of the excretions, and the attendant depression under these circumstances, led the speculatist in question to the formation of a body of medical principles, the substance of which may be summed up in a very few words, namely, that our notions of specific diseases, and specific remedies, are founded on false assumptions, that even strength and weakness are merely states in reference to the condition of the first passages ; and that if the practitioner can but succeed in procuring a regularity and orderly performance of the digestive functions, every thing else falls into order by course and consequence. It is the property of genius to do a great deal with slender means. Brown must have been surprised at the extensive



spread of doctrines which he propounded in personal pique, and, very probably, at least in the first instance, gave no credit to himself; and in like manner, Mr. Abernethy must wonder to see the champions of his chylopoetic principles planting themselves in every corner of the land, and singing pœans of praise to their first promulger. Simple and slight as the above propositions appear to be, and really are, they have, nevertheless, influenced to such an extent the medical opinions and practice of this country, as to have operated a thorough change both in our theoretical notions and practical views. That this is not an overcharged statement, may be gathered from what is immediately to follow. A very little more than twenty years since, a German physician, having paid a visit to England, expressed himself in the following terms on the subject of British medicine:—

“From infancy the English are



brought up in bodily activity, cleanliness, and the enjoyment of fresh air. Their nourishment is strong, consisting more of solid roast beef, with spices, strong beer, and wine, than of soups, vegetables, and weak liquors. Even their methods of cure are more vigorous, though not always more proper; and the use of neutral salts and purgatives, so common in Germany, is much less so there. Hence there is a greater energy in the phenomena of the powers of life; *hence fewer gastric complaints*; hence the English support much stronger doses of stimulant, hot and active medicines, than we dare think of in Germany. The rheumatic constitution is almost endemic; but we must not forget that the English understand by this term, *every kind of pain in the limbs, even obviously gastric affections*. The author saw, in a case of pain in the pericordia and shoulder, which proceeded evidently from gastric tricity, a blister applied to the nape of



the neck. Next to rheumatic complaints, consumption and dropsy are most frequent; but their treatment is quite empirical with *specifica et heroica*, without a plan of cure or due indication. Mercury is liberally employed, (he goes on to inform his readers,) and opium is notoriously a common remedy. It is not credible how it is lavished and misused. As in Germany it is customary to add to a recipe already answering every indication, a little syrup or cinnamon water; in England, so much laudanum is added. The third great remedy (our German critic adds) is the Peruvian bark. From the year 1788 till 1793 there have been imported into Britain 634,783 pounds, without reckoning what may have been smuggled. Now, if we deduct 123,700 pounds, which have been exported, there still remain half a million of pounds used in the country itself. The causes of this extensive use of it are, beside the real excellence of the remedy,



the natural tendency of the physicians and people to believe in specifics and miracles, the authority of former great practitioners, *and the great <sup>scarcity</sup> variety of gastric diseases, as well in reality as in the heads of physicians.*"

Now, so far from there being any *present* lack of "gastricity in the heads of physicians" of this country, there are those among us, and that not a few, who will laugh you to scorn if you theorize upon the production of any disease without beginning and ending with the "digestive organs." This, they say, is the grand mainspring of every thing, for which we have been groping in the dark for more than two thousand years: and for want of which the whole machinery of medicine has, hitherto, been going wrong. Let us enter an infirmary, and mark the multifarious forms which disease assumes. In one corner of a ward you see a child with a scrofulous affection of the hip joint;



you observe that the disorder, commencing perhaps in the ligamentous parts, has extended itself among the muscles and membranes, and threatens, nay, has almost accomplished its threat to destroy the functions of the joint that it has attacked. Anticipating the event, you pity the destiny of the individual; but your anticipations are erroneous, your pity is misplaced; it is not in the hip but in the stomach that the disorder lies, and by a little regulation of the chylopoeitic and assistant chylopoeitic viscera, crooked things and curved limbs will soon be made straight. There is another individual with an obstinate inflammation in his eye, obstinate hitherto, because it has been injudiciously treated as an actual affection of that organ, which is seemingly the seat of the malady, but, know sir, the disease is deeper seated; the great sympathetic nerve, the gastric membranes are the organs in fault; we shall straightway com-



mence our operations upon these, and the almost "blind will soon be restored to sight." That ward of your building, it is presumed, from its name, is devoted to the reception of venereal cases. Venereal cases! what an absurdity! Does Aretæus, does Celsus talk any thing about this modern bugbear, this unnecessary preventive of innocent pleasures, the lues venerea? *Stomach* cases you mean; and with a due use of alteratives, and sarsaparilla, we shall soon empty the apartment of its present occupants. Are rheumatic affections very frequent with you? We are not aware of the import of your question. Rheumatism with us is a name without a meaning: we meet, indeed, often with many muscular and membranous pains, which yield easily to sulphate of magnesia and blue-pill: but all these are mere instances of gastric irregularities. Pulmonary consumption, it is presumed, still continues its ravages? It does so, but



it is because gastriccity has not yet sufficiently established its ascendancy over the minds of medical practitioners. When the faculty shall have come duly and universally to appreciate the importance of regulating the stomach and bowels, our consumptive wards can be turned into committee rooms, where we may meet to triumph in the prevalence and success of the gastric faith!

It has been unhesitatingly asserted by one writer, that Mr. Abernethy's discoveries have been the only real improvements in medicine since the time of Hippocrates. In like manner, it will be recollected, that Brown was by many hailed as the Newton that had at length appeared and brought with him a flood of light and day. Indeed, this last author was modest enough to make this eureka declaration for himself, "*quasi prima diurna,*" he tells us, "*lux demum adfulsit.*" And again, in the masterly preface to his elements, which wants



nothing but truth to make it one of the most admirable compositions that ever was penned, he propounds the following question with an air of triumphant exultation: *An igitur ars conjecturalis, sibi parum constans, et longe plerisque sui partibus falsa, in CERTAM demum, quæ vitæ dici possit, SCIENTIAM est redacta?*

On the score, Gentlemen, of the last set of principles to which I have alluded, I feel myself placed in a situation of somewhat more difficulty and delicacy. There seems to be a more intimate admixture of truth, and what I conceive to be error, in the vascular than in the ventricular theories: and most certainly the doctrines of this school are not so vulnerable to the shafts of ridicule as in the cases upon which I have above endeavoured to comment.

Were I to aim at designating those views of medicine upon which I would now venture one or two brief strictures,



I would do it by a very simple illustration: let us suppose an individual to be affected with febrile lassitude, connected with headach, and that general depression of the animal faculties which characterizes the state in question. What is the precise condition of the bodily organization under these circumstances? I am told in reply, either vascular congestion or increased momentum of the circulating fluid, the result of general plenitude. But I often see marks and indications of quite as much fulness, and even of local determinations, without such plethora and topical momentum bringing with them that oppression and derangement of the animal faculties which is observed in the adduced instance. Hence I infer that something beyond the blood vessels has been originally *at fault*, and that this something requires to be particularly recognised both in pathology and plans of treatment. Now it does, I



confess, appear to me that some of our ablest pathologists, and most accredited writers of the present period, have too much lost sight of the affections of the sentient organs and primary moving powers, in their wish to dwell upon inflammatory and congestive states, as explicatory of all morbid phenomena. It is curious to observe, how the doctrines of the vascular speculatists, if I may use the terms, have, like the stomachic and hepatic tenets, arisen by a kind of spring and reaction from the downfall of the Cullenian principles of spasm; and how determinate a spirit is evinced in the new converts to get rid of every relick of the ancient superstition. Determinations of blood now take place of the antiquated notions of nervous irritation; and it is really too largely inferred, that the essence of *all* disease, the alpha and omega of every sort of derangement, pulmonary or ventricular, muscular or mental, con-



sists in nothing else than disturbed and irregular circulation. Cough, for example, I have heard it contended, can in no case be constituted by any other circumstance than some kind of pulmonic inflammation, or at least congestion; spasmodic cough, says a rigid theorist of this school, is to me a term importing nothing. But how can this postulate be reconciled with the fact frequently observed of sympathetic irritations of the pulmonary organs being made to cease with the facility of a charm, by the removal of the cause out of which the sympathetic disturbance had grown. Destroy or expel half a dozen ascarides from the rectum, and you will sometimes, by so doing, cure at once a protracted and troublesome cough, without detracting a particle of blood, or in any other way lessening the momentum of this fluid, than by diminishing the nervous irritation, from which, if present, the vas-



cular excitement had proceeded. I say, *if present*, since I cannot help adopting that heretical creed which supposes the possibility of a great deal of occasional disturbance and irritation, without even the consequential presence of inflammatory or congestive states. For the propriety of the term spasm, as applied to the conditions now conceived, it would be far from my wish to argue. It is not the word, but the thing signified by the word, about which it is important to have accurate notions: and without further enlargement, it will readily be inferred as my opinion, that in opposing the gratuitous and frequently erroneous assumptions of the spasmodic theorists, we have urged the resistance not merely to the extent of pushing away the opposition to truth, but have fallen prostrate by the weight of our own powers, upon the recession of the obstacle. At one



time it seemed to be nearly lost sight of that there were such things at all as blood vessels: it now, by some, appears to be almost forgotten that there are powers in animal and intellectual organization, which impel and impede, urge and control the vascular action.

As I have accidentally fallen upon deranged states of the pulmonary organs, with a view to illustrate the tenets it is now my wish to inculcate, it may not be irrelative to introduce the sentiments of the venerable Heberden on the particular head of asthma. This author, who was the advocate of no system beyond that supplied by actual observation, remarks, when treating on the cause of the disease in question, that “if we advert to the comparatively little disorder which dissection sometimes displays in the lungs of individuals who have died of this malady; if we take into our estimate of circum-



stances the very long intermissions which are sometimes found in asthmatic paroxysms, the individuals during the interval being apparently free from the disease; if we recollect that fits of asthma are often obviously induced by different passions of the mind, and that they do not seldom occur during the hours of sleep; it would appear fair to infer, that although other causes may prove operative in the production of the disease, it certainly seems in many cases to depend upon some state of the nerves, and to have its paroxysms excited by disordered affections of this part of the frame; “*ex quadam perturbatione officiorum quæ nervorum propria existimantur.*”

Those morbid derangements, indeed, which have a still more unequivocal title to the name of nervous, have recently been talked of and considered as seated primarily in the blood vessels;



such as madness: but were madness, as it is assumed, inflammation merely, how could we account for the numerous instances both of cause and cure from mere mental impulse? Go into a madhouse, and mark the ravings of one of the most maniacal of its inmates; there are no limits to the tumults of this man's emotions; none to the violence of his expressions; he is all vehemence, and all excitement: now place your hand upon the wrist of this unfortunate sufferer, and you will probably perceive the pulsations indicating nothing of the storm that is raging within. But the disturbance, you say, is in the vessels of the head. Press then the temporal artery, and its movements you will find to correspond with the comparative calmness of the pulse in other parts. Further, let the keeper of the asylum in which our individual is confined, enter his cell during his



most ardent fits of maniacal fury: let such keeper cast but a *look* of menace and authority upon his patient, and all the agitation will instantaneously subside into a dead and sullen calm: and this subsidence of excitement, let it further be remarked, is often attempted in vain to be effected by lowering and depletory measures. And yet to hear some of our modern pathologists talk on the topic of mental alienation, you would be disposed to conceive that we have only to bring forward the lancet, and to keep back food, and the offices of madhouse proprietors would soon become sinecures.

One more allusion, and I have done. We all know that Tetanus is a disease constituted of very violent contortions and agitations of the muscles of the body: we are all aware likewise, that it is too frequently an unmanageable and fatal affection. But there are instances on authentic record, of exceed-



ingly large quantities of opium actually curing this dreadful complaint. Now opium is one of the least admissible medicines, (without careful management,) in congestive and inflammatory states: have we not, therefor, presumptive proof, at least, that those evidences of vascular irritation which dissection sometimes displays, when the distemper in question terminates in death, are rather its consequences than its essences; and that the nerves and muscles are the parts primarily attacked?

Gentlemen, before I conclude, permit me to state my anticipation of the following query on the part of my auditors. You have been abundantly free with the doctrines and dogmas of others, it will be urged; let us hear what principles you have yourself to propose in lieu of those to which you have been so lavishly objecting? To this I beg to reply, None. Nay, it is the very notion of ruling prin-



ciple against which I would venture to protest. The animal machine, as it appears to me, refuses to be regulated by that simplicity of movement which our desires dictate, and our ingenuity devises: and I would sum up the whole of the evidence, by expressing it as my humble opinion, that there is nothing faulty in any of the tenets upon which I have ventured to comment, excepting in their unwarrantable extension, and exclusive application. Moderately conceived, and discriminately applied, they are all true, and all useful. That the agency of the liver is very extensive, and very important throughout the whole of the animal economy, it were flying in face of fact to deny; and such agency had not, allowably, till within the few past years, been duly appreciated in the explication of several disordered states. Apoplectic attacks, and other congestive affections in the sinuses and blood-vessels of the



brain, might often be warded off, by taking due cognizance of the hepatic secretion: in fevers it is frequently expedient to direct our indications of treatment by an especial regard to the circumstances of this viscus. Dropsical and abdominal disorders are, as it were, the liver's own by right; and pulmonary derangements are not seldom suspected, when the actual state is hepatic disorganization.

In the second place, the extensive sympathies of the chylopoietic and assistant chylopoietic viscera with the nervous frame, and with the whole man, could not fail to have been recognised by very early observers of the powers and properties of vital and intellectual being: but a knowledge of such sympathies had not, perhaps, been duly applied to practical purposes, till the hand of genius moulded them into a body of systematic shape; and, according to the statement



of our German censor, we dealt a little too largely in “*specifica et heroica*,” in the management of disease ; thinking that when weakness was present, bark and steel were ready at hand to meet every want, without regard to necessary preliminaries ; or that when a morbid poison had insinuated itself into the body, nothing further was demanded on the part of the practitioner than to find out and apply its corrective. Our errors in this respect, we have been taught ; and let us profit by the instruction, *fas est ab OMNIBUS doceri*. And, lastly, the vascular views of medicine have given a precision and truth to the pathology of febrile, and even several other derangements, which had been bewildered and obscured by the metaphysical and metaphorical tenets of the nervous and spasmodic schools.

It is frightful, indeed, to reflect upon the practical errors which must have



been committed by the decided devotees to the spasmodic and stimulant creeds, or to those creeds which failed to regard inflammatory and congestive conditions as of prime importance in the regulation of remedial agents. The great desideratum appears to be duly to appreciate *every* power and every principle of the animal frame.

Let then every thing take but a temperate turn, and let the several parts of the whole machine be duly subordinated and regulated, and all will go on well: each principle will act naturally in its own department: the water will begin to quench the fire, the fire will begin to burn the stick, the stick will begin to beat the pig, and, like the old woman in the tale, (if the comparison of such a being to professional men be not ominously offensive,) every obstruction being removed, we shall proceed uninterruptedly to the completion of our several objects.



In a word, Gentlemen, and seriously, by the exercise of our own respective judgment, to select the good from the evil of systematic extravagance, and make a practical use of the same, we shall all, it is hoped, do good in our day and generation; and all be contributing our share of successful exertion towards lessening the sum of human misery.

THE END.



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