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ANNUAL ORATION.

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THE ORATION

DELIVERED FEBRUARY THE 8TH, 1854,

BEFORE THE

NORTH LONDON MEDICAL SOCIETY,

BEING

The First Annual Oration,

BY


ROBERT GREENHALGH, M. D.,

Physician Accoucheur to the Royal General Dispensary, St. Pancras, to the Percy Lying-in and Westminster Hospital Maternity Charities—Consulting Physician Accoucheur to the St. John's Wood and Portland Town Dispensaries, and to the British Lady's Lying-in Charity—Corresponding Fellow of the Surgical Academy of Madrid, &c. &c.

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Annual Oration.

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Mr. President and Gentlemen,

Before I proceed to the consideration of the numerous topics in connexion with Medicine which urge themselves upon my attention, permit me to thank you for the honour you have conferred upon me by electing me your Orator at a period of our existence as a Society, at which mental vigor and unceasing activity are so obviously required, and upon which our existence and success, as a body must ultimately depend. Perhaps no Society ever started more favourably and with greater elements of success in its constitution than the "North London Medical Society."

Not alone countenanced by eminent members of our profession, whose writings have earned for them a well-merited and European fame, but we find these gentlemen lending their active and kind co-operation at our Council and Monthly Meetings; and although this is but our sixth meeting, still I am enabled to refer, with much satisfaction to several highly interesting and instructive communications, by Professor Quain, Jenner and Erichsen, and by Messrs. Sedgwick, Part, Tunaley, and Hainworth, all of which must be fresh in the recollection of my hearers, and are an earnest of the intelligence which exists in, and the hearty good-will which animates the members of our Society.

But, Gentlemen, I should fall far short of my duty did I cease here to enumerate the services which have been so kindly rendered us, and the more so, as I have had numerous opportunities of observing the zeal and activity of two gentlemen, without whose invaluable aid and courteous demeanor we should not in all probability have met here this evening; I allude to our excellent Secretaries, and I am especially anxious to direct your attention to the importance of the functions which they have discharged with such credit to themselves and benefit to us, inasmuch as I feel confident, from the result of considerable personal experience in that capacity, that upon their well-directed energies and the punctual discharge of their duties, much of our usefulness and

success as a body depends. In according to these gentlemen my hearty thanks, I feel I do but give utterance to a sentiment which animates every one here present.

But I must pass from this pleasant duty to the more immediate objects of this address, craving your indulgence for the somewhat desultory manner in which I shall submit these topics to your consideration. When the kind wish of the Council was communicated to me that I should take upon myself the duties of Orator for this year, I lost no time in reflecting in what way and by what means I could best advance the Cause of Science and the welfare of our Society. Surrounded by a literature teeming with original and suggestive communications, I felt at once how difficult, nay impossible, it would be even to enumerate in a profitable manner the numerous valuable additions which have recently been made to the cause of Medicine; so I resolved to confine my observations, necessarily imperfect as they must be, to some few subjects which have lately engrossed the attention of the profession.

A cursory glance at the accumulated experience of the past year will suffice to convince any one, that at no period of the world's history, has Medicine, both theoretical and practical, promised to confer so great and such lasting good upon mankind as at the present time; untrammelled by the vague and fanciful hypotheses of by-gone times, which belong rather to the airy realm of Dreams, than to the deductive region of Science, it has made and still continues to make giant strides, equal to, if not exceeding, any of the kindred sciences and numbering in its ranks, men whom the world will ever delight to honor. To this highly interesting subject, to those practising it, their present and future prospects, it is my purpose to crave your attention this evening. I will not occupy any of the brief period allotted to me by pointing out the benefits conferred by our art upon our fellow creatures, but will assume, without fear of contradiction, that in nobleness and usefulness it is second to no earthly calling when pursued in the proper spirit—that it is a mine in which the cultivated mind may discover exhaustless treasures, and an arena in which the most gigantic intellect may find alike exercise and delight.

To what then is this advance mainly attributable? I believe chiefly to three causes:—

- I. To a more extended and better general and medical education.
- II. To improved methods of investigation.
- III. To the increased facilities offered by the press and societies for the dissemination of knowledge.

Firstly—Education so essential to our happiness and success, as individuals about to engage in the business of the world is especially important to us as gentlemen and as members of a profession, the responsibilities of which are so great. To our sound judgment and practical skill the issues of life and death are frequently entrusted, and upon our correct decisions and promptitude of action the happiness and welfare of families and the prosperity of communities may depend. The necessity for mental culture has been so eloquently pointed out by the *Spectator*, that I cannot forbear to quote the following words—"What sculpture is to a block of marble, education is to the human soul! The philosopher, the saint, and the hero," and I may add the medical man, "the wise, the good and the great man very often lie hid and concealed in the plebeian, which a proper education might have disinterred and brought to light." In short, the educated man is the favorite of heaven and earth, the ornament of his country, the happiest of men.

I should have deemed any observations upon this topic unnecessary before my present audience, except as prefatory to a notice of the strenuous and praiseworthy exertions made of late by our examining bodies in the cause of education, in evidence of which I need but refer you to the curricula issued by these institutions, and which if steadily acted upon and revised from time to time in proportion to the increased facilities for acquiring information, cannot fail to benefit the cause, in which, I trust we are all so warmly interested.

The importance of clinical medicine, so largely insisted upon by Dr. Latham, in 1836, is now fully recognised, and not only do we find our Medical Schools holding out inducements to the student to prosecute with zeal this department of our art, but we also find it insisted upon in their examinations. But I must not dwell longer upon these preliminary branches, upon which alone a valuable treatise might be written, but must proceed,

Secondly—To the consideration of some few of the many improved methods of investigation with which modern science has furnished us, and which have already thrown a lustre around our researches; by them, hitherto hidden mysteries have been unveiled, and nature in her naked and marvellous reality has displayed at every step, the wisdom and greatness of a beneficent Creator.

Histology, physiology, and pathology have within a recent period received a large share of attention, and it must be too obvious to need comment, how much practical medicine must depend for exactitude upon well accredited data in these departments; in truth it is only upon a correct knowledge and right appreciation of the structural elements of this living organism, the

body, its vital manifestations and endowments in health, its lessons in disease and after death, that a sure and lasting foundation can be laid, upon which the logical deductions of the scientific practitioner can be deduced and future advance be predicted. It was left to this era of progress to seek that aid from the microscope and chemistry which they are so well calculated to afford; and we may appeal with proud satisfaction to the wonderful revelations with which our medical literature abounds in confirmation of the fact, that never during the whole history of medicine has our art so largely promised to reach the exalted position of an exact science as at the present period. I would ask in the words of a recent author, "is it possible to estimate at too high a rate the advantage to be derived from this wonder-revealing instrument (the microscope), either in a philosophical, physiological, or practical point of view? By it, forms and combinations which were hitherto unknown, have been subjected to the accurate analysis of the eye: the heretofore unexplored arcana of nature has been disclosed to the delighted observer, and the skill displayed by the Parent of Good in the formation of the mammoth and the monad—the alpha and the omega of creation—has been scrutinized with a minuteness of investigation till now little dreamt of in our philosophy. And is it too much to expect that by its increased application we may be enabled to penetrate still further into the causes of disease, and to introduce modes of treatment more in unison with such increased knowledge? Or that a more intimate acquaintance with the organic changes of matter may be made subservient to the highest aim of medical enquiry—that of the prevention of disease." Alike upon the healthy and abnormal conditions and products of the body has this instrument thrown a flood of light, dissipating crudities which have long fettered the impartial investigator and eliciting facts which the most sanguine hopes could never have anticipated. But for the microscope, "the cell theory," "a doctrine more fruitful, perhaps, in novel results and widely-extended applications than any other in modern physiology," must have remained a hidden mystery, and fatty degeneration would have received but little more developement than from the gustatory powers of the epicure engaged in discussing the degenerate liver of a Strasburg goose. And although the microscopists have been spoken of as "amongst those innumerable retainers to physic, who, for want of other patients, amuse themselves with the stifling of cats in air-pumps, or impaling insects upon the points of needles for microscopic observations;" still we must bear in mind that this was written at a period, when the microscopist could not point as at the present time, to such ample stores as are now alike accessible to the medical and non-medical inquirer.

The Chemist, Pharmaceutist, and Toxicologist have recently supplied us with much valuable information; by them great light has been thrown upon the active principles of drugs, their effects upon the animal economy in health and disease, in ordinary and excessive doses; rendering aid where it is so markedly required, dissipating erroneous and crude notions, confirming by more correct data past experience, and supplying invaluable evidence to the jurist in the detection of the criminal.

But, gentlemen, I cannot thus hastily dismiss the subject of Chemistry, more especially Organic Chemistry, without requesting a passing tribute of respect and thanks to the late Dr. Prout, to Baron Liebig and Herr Simon, for their unwearied exertions in this branch of enquiry; in fact, it is not too much to say that in their hands Organic Chemistry has become a new science, the influence of which upon preventive and curative medicine it is impossible even to conjecture.

Thirdly—Man has been defined a social animal, an idiosyncrasy of his heavenly Maker, and gregarious in his habits. Can more cogent evidence be adduced than this in support of the wisdom and good likely to accrue to us and to our fellow creatures by such friendly and social unions as the present; by them good will is engendered, friendships are cemented and new ones formed, information is given and received, new ideas are elicited, the timid are encouraged, and the bold criticised, and moral strength is given to valuable doctrines, which, but for such collective influence, would have languished into total or comparative insignificance. It has been said by some recent author, that the discoveries which rendered a Harvey and a Jenner immortal, would have been more speedily received and more fully elaborated had they possessed the advantages of social intercourse which we now enjoy—a notion in which I fully concur. But it has been also said, that good as the principle of such meetings undoubtedly is, yet it may be overwrought; a statement to which I also subscribe. Still I would ask, can such ideas be entertained in reference to the “North London Medical Society?” I think not. Firmly established, without a local habitation but a name, by the collective voice of no less than ninety-four members, men of fair name and repute—who could or who would be daring enough to foster a doubt as to the advisability of such an institution, remote from other societies in this metropolis, and in no way interfering within their range of action? Having then settled the necessity for, and the utility of such a body, and knowing, as we well do, the elements of which it is composed, the relation of parts to parts and its healthful condition, let us put out our energies to maintain its integrity, to infuse new life by inducing our friends to aid our endeavours and give

evidence of that maturity which it is so essential it should manifest.

The Press, that strong arm for good or for evil, has largely exercised its power in our service during the past year; and, upon the whole, we may congratulate ourselves for many and great advantages derived through its influence. By it not only have cases of rare occurrence and practical interest been placed prominently before large numbers of our profession, but clinical and other lectures upon every branch of medical enquiry, the results of hospital experience, the records of societies, of individual experience, the critical analyses of important works, &c., &c., been rendered accessible in an interesting and cheap form, which, but for its aid, would never have seen the light. Brought into contact, by its wide-spread influence, with nations the most remote, and with facts the most recent, knowledge is speedily disseminated and its blessings dispensed. What has been said of the Press may in part be said of medical literature—and here I point with happy satisfaction to the volumes and treatises which lie before me to state, in words more eloquent than I am capable of using, the value of their contents and the practical skill and industry of their authors.

As every science depends so vitally upon the correct interpretation of words and their proper application, and upon the way in which facts are observed and recorded, I trust I may be pardoned for drawing your especial attention to three works which have lately issued from the press, and which richly deserve a place in every medical man's library; I allude to "Trench on the Study of Words," "What to observe," published by the Society of Observation, and "Mayne's Expository Lexicon."

These remarks naturally lead me to say a few words upon the importance, nay, the necessity, of establishing a library in connection with our Society, and I feel the greater satisfaction in alluding to this subject inasmuch as the authors among us are numerous and celebrated. What better inauguration of such an institution than the presentation by the authors of the several treatises upon which, in great part, their fame rests?

Nor must I omit to mention the successful efforts of the artist, of which recent medical works bear such ample evidence. By him, among other delineations, the integral structure and aggregate compounds of the body, and the diversified changes of disease, have been pictured to the eye, and have impressed upon the memory prints not easily to be effaced. Also, from the unerring pencil of nature may we anticipate, from specimens now before us, the most fruitful results. Already, it will be seen, have Microscopy and Photography gone hand in hand in aid of medical science, and the actinic ray has left its delicate and truth-

ful tracery upon the sensitive surface, there faithfully registered for the benefit of the present and succeeding generations.

Now to the more immediate objects of this evening's address:—

Epidemic diseases are at length beginning to receive that amount of attention which their importance so imperatively demands. Not alone do we find members of our own profession carefully investigating this class of diseases, but the government and parish authorities have at length become aware of the evils which surround them, and by an alacrity in sanitary enactments, sadly too long neglected, have shown at length a disposition to listen to the warning voice of the profession. Let us hope that their energies will not flag until the abominations of foul sewerage, bad water and food, and other nuisances are exterminated. To the indefatigable Dr. Carpenter are we much indebted for a most valuable and philosophic paper upon the predisposing causes of zymotic diseases. This author considers that the absorption, hypersecretion, or obstructed elimination of decomposing matter, either normally or excessively generated in the system, tending to produce an accumulation of disintegrated azotised compounds, in a state of change, in the circulating current, will, on the fermentation theory, afford the greatest readiness to the developement of any zymotic poison, more especially when two or more of the above conditions are at work. "If it be inquired," says Dr. Carpenter, "what is the practical bearing of this discussion, we at once reply that, if our view be correct, it would be possible to extinguish the greater number of epidemic diseases, however intense or abundant may be the atmospheric or other agencies which constitute their potential causes, by preserving the blood of every individual in that state of unfermentability (if we may coin such a word) which shall effectually prevent these poisons from finding the conditions of their developement within the body, this end being to be attained, on the one hand, by preventing (so far as may be possible) any unusual production of fermentable matter in or out of the body; and, on the other, by promoting its removal, when it is inevitably generated, (as in the puerperal state) through the respiratory process, which ought to be favoured as much as possible, not merely by a free supply of air, but by the reduction of that air to the lowest temperature at which the condition of the patient will allow it to be safely inhaled." Again, Mr. Grainger has illustrated most forcibly the first position of Dr. Carpenter by showing how animal exhalations from the lungs and skin, no matter how minute in quantity, may engender, under favourable circumstances, such as overcrowding, especially in sleeping apartments, typhus, cholera, and infectious diseases.

Dr. Alison, in a review upon the exciting causes of epidemics,

after some logical observations upon the positive and negative value of statistics, and the fallacies which should be guarded against in drawing conclusions from them, proceeds to encourage us to these investigations by observing "that so late as the time of Sydenham, the greater part of the annual mortality in London resulted from four diseases (plague, small-pox, dysentery, and scurvy), which are still known, and still nearly as fatal as ever to those who are affected by them, but, that the number who take these diseases in a given time in this country is now comparatively trifling, simply because their specific causes are known and may be counteracted;" he then gives some striking illustrations of the cholera poison attaching itself to fomites, and affecting peculiarly those who neglect such precautions as the use of lotions or fumigations of chlorine; and, having pointed out the influence of intercourse of the healthy with the sick, as illustrated by the great prevalence of cholera among the nurses in the cholera hospitals of Edinburgh and Glasgow, and briefly referred to the researches of Drs. Holland, Graves, and others, in attestation of the facts, that this disease has always been found to follow the lines of human intercourse in opposition even to the trade and monsoon winds, and that it is never observed to make its way from one place to another more rapidly than human beings can travel, this shrewd and observing pathologist draws the following conclusions: "when these different facts are duly considered, we maintain we do not go further than statistical evidence will support us, in asserting that this disease (cholera) may be propagated by the intercourse of the healthy with the sick, or with something that has been thrown off from the bodies of the sick; that to doubt the truth of this principle is to betray an 'unmanly want of confidence in the clear conclusions of human reason;' and that any regulations for checking the extension of the disease which proceed on the supposition of its having *no contagious property* must be held to be essentially faulty." He then makes some very pertinent observations upon the possibility of the dissemination of disease, by swarms of microscopic animalcula or by vegetative germs; upon the susceptibility of some, and the insusceptibility of other persons, to imbibe the cholera poison, when exposed to its contagious or epidemic influence; upon the alterations in the intensity of the disease itself—and having shewn that the disease appears in certain localities, affecting numerous detached individuals simultaneously, while not only neighbouring localities, but the attendants on the sick in these, remain unaffected—he concludes his valuable paper by urging the establishment of houses of refuge, "into which the persons from tainted localities, especially the most liable to the disease, might be received, immediately on the violent attack, or

the death or removal to hospital of the first cases, where those persons might be regularly fed, and preserved from cold, wet and fatigue, and from the use of strong liquors, at least until the time was over, when the most rapid successions of cases have been observed to occur, and until the rooms where the disease had broken out had been cleansed, fumigated with chlorine, and thoroughly aired." In connexion with this subject, the deodorising powers of soot have been pointed out by Dr. Elliot.

The importance of these enquiries, and the possibility that during this spring we may be again visited by this devastating scourge (cholera), will, I trust, be deemed a sufficient apology for occupying your time with the following quotation from the "Times" of January, 16th, 1854, headed "War and Pestilence." It is as follows: "Some interesting tables have issued from the health office, comparing the loss of life by war and pestilence. It appears that, in twenty-two years of war, there were 19,796 killed, and 79,709 wounded; giving an annual average of 899 killed, and 3623 wounded. In 1848—49, there were no fewer than 72,180 killed by cholera and diarrhoea in England and Wales, and 144,360 attacked; 34,397 of the killed were able bodied persons, capable of getting their own living! Besides these deaths from the great epidemic, 115,000 die annually on an average from preventible diseases; while 11,419 die by violence. Comparing the killed in nine great battles, including Waterloo, 4740—with the numbers killed by cholera in London, 1848—49, 14,139—we find a difference of 9399 in favor of war. In cholera visitations, twelve per cent, sometimes twenty per cent, of the medical men employed died. The London missionaries die as fast as those in foreign countries, and there are some districts in London which make the missionary society ask themselves whether they have a right to send men into them. From the returns of twelve unions, it is found that 3657 widows and orphans are chargeable to the cholera of 1848—49, entailing an expenditure of 121,000*l.* in four years only."

I have nothing satisfactory to communicate in reference to the treatment of zymotic diseases. The variability of the phenomena of different epidemics, and the differences which manifest themselves in their accession, progress, and decline, must ever surround this subject with difficulties. Upon hygienic measures and treatment upon rational principles, do our chief chances of success depend. Although general principles have been found inadequate to the prevention and cure of these grave pestilences; and salines, calomel, sulphuric acid, opium, etc. may have affected some cures; yet, upon the whole, I cannot help feeling that our patients and practical medicine are more likely to be benefited by the adoption of the rational plan, than of the empirical system.

I cannot now enter into the details of the bill for compulsory vaccination, which has recently become the law of the land; but I would briefly remark, that the principle and object involved in this Act are so important, that we may well spare ourselves those feelings of opposition to its provisions, which appear to have animated many members of our profession; and the more so, as I have been credibly informed that it is the intention of Lord Lyttleton to move during this Session of Parliament, for the repeal of the objectionable clauses. Dr. Seaton's valuable letter to Lord Palmerston, confirms the statement of Mr. Marson (perhaps the best modern authority on small-pox and vaccination) "that small-pox, in the unprotected, remains to this day as virulent as it perhaps ever was, destroying about one-third of all whom it attacks, and that it is especially destructive to infantile life." He continues, "Vaccination, when performed in infancy, affords almost complete protection against the fatality of small-pox, up to the period of puberty:" this sufficiently attests the importance of this subject, and the necessity for government enactment.

I must now say a few words upon the use of anæsthetic agents in the practice of medicine,—surgery and midwifery. Powerful and speedy in their effects, and transitory in their action, they require great caution and steady persistence in their administration. Want of due attention to these particulars has led, in some cases, to fatal consequences; in others, to partial and unsatisfactory results, which have tended to raise doubts in the minds of some practitioners, as to the safety and advisability of trusting to their powers. The records of extended experience in their use have sufficiently proved their beneficial and safe action, when slowly and cautiously administered, and with a due admixture of atmospheric air. It is worthy of consideration, whether the profession have done wisely in altogether discarding Ether as an anæsthetic from practice: my own impression being (and that derived from considerable personal experience), that there are a class of cases, in which this latter may be far more safely used than the former.

I must confess that I have a predilection in favor of some form of apparatus which alone covers the mouth, leaving the nostrils free for the ready ingress of air; some such apparatus as I now submit to your notice. If a slight effect be desired, as in natural labour, the patient should be directed to hold it to her own mouth; when muscular relaxation ensues, the hand drops, and with it the apparatus; upon again becoming conscious of her suffering, she can repeat the inhalation in the same manner again and again, until the desired end be attained. If more completed anæsthesia be necessary, as in cases of severe surgical operations, difficult turning

or instrumental labour, then in addition to the above procedure, the nostrils may be closed by the fingers, while the apparatus is held to the mouth by some person in attendance, attention being directed from time to time to its effects.

Chloroform has been given to persons of every age and temperament, and for almost every operation. It has further been given in doses, from half a dram to four ounces—from ten minutes to thirty hours, and in almost every class of disease. In convulsive diseases, its effects have been very marked. In small doses, or as a celebrated physician has said, "*chloroform à la reine*," it stimulates the uterus to increased action, and promotes general and local relaxation; in large and full doses, it paralyses, for a time, the uterine contractions, relaxes the soft parts, and so renders any operation of far more easy accomplishment. I can find no satisfactory evidence in confirmation of a statement which has been made, that insanity and other puerperal affections, have become more prevalent since the introduction of these anæsthetics into obstetric practice.

Although midwifery must be regarded rather as a branch of surgery than medicine, yet I trust I may be pardoned for occupying some portion of the time allotted to me, in briefly alluding to a few points in connexion with this department, to which my attention has been chiefly directed, and in which I feel so deeply interested.

To Drs. Simpson and Reid, are our warmest thanks due for some important observations upon the duration of pregnancy, which, on the average, calculated by Dr. Reid from the known period of conception in forty cases, may range from the 270th to the 280th day. There is no satisfactory evidence, says this gentleman, of gestation having been prolonged beyond 293 days. I need not point out the value of such observations in a medico-legal point of view.

Still more important, however, is the subject of uterine hæmorrhage, so fraught with anxiety to the practitioner and danger to the patient. By Dr. Simpson have the sources of flooding in placenta prævia, and partial detachments of that viscus been pointed out; and, I think, I may say, it is now generally admitted that these discharges proceed from two sources; namely, from the arteries of the uterus through the placenta, and from the patulous venous sinuses on the surface of the uterus. Further, it has been satisfactorily shewn that, in many cases, through the contractions of the uterus or other means, the circulation in the placenta has become impeded, and the flow of blood from its exposed surface arrested, the afterbirth has been expelled before the child with perfect safety to the mother. Advantage has been taken of

this fact, and in cases where from excessive loss of blood and alarming prostration, the introduction of the hand into the uterus for the purpose of turning the child, would from the additional demand upon the patient's powers have been dangerous, the placenta has been artificially detached and extracted. Experience has confirmed the safety of this procedure, of which I could adduce more than one example from my own case-book.

Also worthy of mention is the fact, that from statistics collected by various competent and trustworthy authorities, the Cæsarian section has been found to be, when early performed and with due precautions, far less fatal in its results, than has generally been supposed; thus, "when practised before the lapse of six hours from the rupture of the membranes, twenty women out of thirty-nine have recovered," and "thirty-four out of thirty-seven infants have been born alive." I do not think it is too much to anticipate that, with the present improved methods of abdominal surgery and treatment, the mortality will be still further reduced, so as to render this operation available in a far larger number of cases of pelvic distortion, and even in cases of ruptured uterus, which, under the present mode of treatment, have been so lamentably fatal.

Nor must I omit to notice the value of turning in cases of slight deformity of the pelvis, which, with but little, if any, additional risk to the mother, has been the means of saving many an infant from certain destruction by the perforator.

It now becomes my pleasing duty to refer to the honor conferred by the University of Oxford, upon several members of our profession, during the last year. I would especially allude to the humane endeavours of a Conolly in the cause of insanity, to the unpaid exertions of a Forbes in aid of medical literature, of which the *British and Foreign Medical Review* will ever remain as a lasting record, and to the unceasing exertions of a Hastings in behalf of medical reform, to remind you how well merited was the distinction shown to them. The last two gentlemen have likewise received the honor of knighthood at the hands of their Sovereign. Furthermore, upon the philosophic Holland, the honor of a baronetage has been worthily conferred.

I have lingered long and pleasantly upon the many attractions and benefits, with which our profession is surrounded; still, like most earthly callings, it has its attendant ills; and fain would I cease here, did not stern duty call upon me to point out, that cankers fret and worry the body politic, as well as the body physical, which in malignancy threaten to retard its healthful developement, unless a remedy of a potent character be applied. Union is force! Let us endeavour to realize the truth of this

motto, and exhibit, by a manly opposition, but a small portion of that daring which we are daily in the habit of exercising, when facing the dread pestilences we are called upon to investigate and treat; and, rely upon it, the evils which I am about to mention will soon be banished from among us.

Out of the long catalogue of quackeries subversive of correct principles, and injurious in their results, we may select the following, as especially requiring a passing notice. I allude to homœopathy, hydropathy, and the speculum practice.

Homœopathy may be regarded as a wholesome reaction to the drenching system of the older apothecaries. It has taught us the advantages of an abstemious regimen, and the curative powers of time and faith, these universal panaceas alike for mental and physical ills, in chronic functional diseases. Towards those who entertain a sincere belief in "the infinitesimals" involved in this system, I feel the most profound pity. To those who are mindful of their temporal interests alone, and I fear there are many such, I would recommend the plan adopted by a lady, for whose malady gold was the remedy prescribed, who having been subjected to the administration of a homœopathic dose by olfaction by her homœopathic doctor, passed the fee before his nose, and then replaced it in her pocket. Frequent washing, free perspiration, brisk frictions, a well-assorted dietary, regular and early hours, with residence in a snug retreat in the fresh and invigorating air of the country, apart from worldly anxieties and toils, is the sum total of the hydropathist—means, the value of which, and their proper application, are so fully acknowledged and acted upon by the legitimate practitioner, that it needs no specialist to direct his attention to them. Although we may indulge in a smile at the globulism of the homœopathists, and at the reputed all-sufficiency of water for the cure of disease in the hands of the hydropathists, who have drawn so largely upon the credulity and the pockets of their deluded victims, yet I feel we cannot, in too strong terms, reprehend the wholesale manner in which the speculum has been and is used in the present day, and into which I myself was led some years ago by the specious reasoning which emanated in great part from the other side of the channel. I do not deny the value of the speculum as a means of diagnosis and treatment, neither do I deny that cases, every now and then, occur which call for its employment, nor would I maintain that no good has resulted from its use; but that its value has been far overrated, that little discrimination has been used in the selection of appropriate cases, and that its effects upon the mind are, in the great majority of cases, positively injurious, I am equally certain. If, gentlemen, you have not had sufficient experience in the use of this instrument to convince you of the truth of what I

have said, I must refer you to an excellent paper, by Dr. Robert Lee, in the thirty-third volume of the "Medico-Chirurgical Transactions;" he, as well as others, has seen quite enough of its bad results to induce him to banish it from his practice, except in urgent cases where every rational mode of treatment has been had recourse to without effect, or where the life of the sufferer, from the exhausting nature of disease, is threatened. In the ranks of our profession has this instrument sprung up and flourished; let it be to our influence, and not to popular feeling, which has been so outraged of late by its abuse, that it is again confined within its due and proper limits.

In making the foregoing observations, believe me, gentlemen, I have not been actuated by any personal feeling; but I have been led solely to these remarks from a conviction that the cause of truth has been greatly injured by the over zeal of some and the intemperate opposition of other practitioners. I deem it right to guard myself against the imputation of personality, because it cannot be denied that in many medical discussions of late personal considerations have usurped the place of philosophic enquiry, and a victory over the individual appears to have been more highly prized than the elucidation of some disputed point. Let us bear in mind the admirable advice of Dr. Churchill on this subject, who says, let us "endeavour to express our opinion without asperity, and with an earnest desire to avoid giving pain to any one; when we agree, let us frankly express the pleasure this gives us. Above all, let it be our duty to lay before the profession our reasons for approval or disapproval, with the facts upon which they are grounded; thus not only endeavouring to communicate information, but, in fact, appealing to the only tribunal capable of finally deciding upon the merits of the case."

It may be asserted, and with truth, that during the progress of intelligence injurious elements will be extinguished, while the causes of improvement are lasting in their effects, and therefore that time alone would be quite adequate to put down these and other forms of quackery; still so great are the moral and social ills necessarily attendant upon these systems, that though I have admitted that *some good may* arise out of quackery, still I *do not* admit that the end justifies the means. I say that it becomes our duty to unite in forwarding the best and most speedy means by which such grievous injuries inflicted upon us and the community at large can be eradicated. I allude to a well digested plan of reform, in which the rights and privileges of medical men are fully recognized by the Government, and the formation of a Medico-Ethical Society, composed of those members of the profession who have earned by their talents and by the probity of their conduct

the confidence of their brother practitioners. At the bar, in the church, army and navy, may be found parallels, which long usage has firmly established and approved. Surely members of the medical profession are not less entitled to support in the conscientious discharge of their duties, and protection against the aggression of arrogant charlatans, than these gentlemen.

I cannot allow this opportunity to pass without noticing the system of biographical advertising which has recently excited so much attention, and which, I am happy to add, has been so generally condemned. Through the example set by several eminent members of the profession, this practice has led to the worst results, and I feel confident that could these gentlemen have anticipated but a fraction of the evils which have arisen out of it they never would have lent their names and countenance to such a system.

Even the erudite Göthe, the greatest and most versatile of German poets, when urged by his friends to write his life, deemed apology necessary when penning it; although with the laudable object in view "to spare the young those circuitous paths on which he himself had lost his way." How widely different the tone, and, I fear, the objects of recent medical biographies. Gentlemen, life is chequered, and as in every picture lights and shadows are to be found, so, depend upon it, in every man's life, impartially told, many dark as well as bright spots exist. It needs no laboured argument to prove that—

"One man's word is no man's word,
Justice needs that both be heard."

Coleridge has quaintly and truthfully observed, that "as there is much beast and some devil in man, so is there some God in him. The beast and the devil may be conquered, but in this life never destroyed;" yet, in spite of this honest declaration, what do we find in these biographies? pictures (I ought rather to say daubs) without shadows, the angel without the devil, fictions, not realities; truth is sacrificed at the shrine of vanity; and the erudition and skill of one gentleman, and the advantages of one institution have been heralded at the expense of others no less worthy of professional and public support; as examples, the highest object and aim of all biographies, they are none. One is led by these effusions to imagine that many of these gentlemen must have been painfully conscious of the ephemeral nature of their works, and must have felt, with the poet, that—

"Things of this nature scarce survive that night
That gives them birth; they perish in the sight,
Cast by so far from *after life*, that there
Can scarcely aught be said, but that they were."

Let us rather practice than talk of our noble conduct and deeds. Let us not debase ourselves to the level of advertising quacks, but rather trust to our own exertions and to time to raise us to that position amongst our fellows and the public, which well directed industry never fails to secure.

That Medicine, founded, until a comparatively recent period, chiefly upon conjectural data, should have been slow in reaching its present developement; that many absurdities and great diversity of opinion should have emanated from and existed among its professors, ought not to excite surprise, and the less so, when we bear in mind the insufficiency of the means of advance at their command.

Although Montaigne, in the sixteenth century, narrates of Medicine, that "it changes according to the climates and moons," and records among other reasons for his lack of confidence in the Divine art the following case:—"A man, (says this author,) of that profession (physic) is lately dead of the stone, who had made use of extreme abstinence to contend with his disease. His fellow physicians said that, on the contrary, this abstinence from drink had dried his body up and baked the gravel in his bladder." Yet, while we may feel inclined to smile at the inconsistencies of our less learned ancestors, still we must admit, that even in Montaigne's time much had been achieved by their exertions, and we cannot but admire the devoted zeal and ardent courage with which they struggled against the many powerful prejudices and gross superstitions which beset them at every step.

Comparing then the hypothetical and conjectural of the past with the theoretical and rational systems of the present, bearing in mind the positive data upon which modern research is based, and the accuracy with which the minutest fact is recorded, may we not fairly anticipate a brilliant future for practical Medicine. Within a recent period, the untiring Hunter, the philosophic Bell, the philanthropic Jenner, the sagacious Laennec, and the shrewd Abernethy, flourished among us; and although these great luminaries have set below the horizon, still has their great genius risen with effulgent splendour, shedding a lustre around the present age and casting beams of intelligence into ages yet untold.

Nor does analogy fail to inspire us with hope! By slow and almost imperceptible degrees are all the great changes of nature effected. From the puny acorn, the sturdy oak is reared; vegetation commencing with the lichen spreads into the richness and luxuriance of the forest; continents are formed from the deposits of innumerable rills; the labours of the minutest molusk become by countless small additions the coral reef; the still and silent village brook, fed by tributary streamlets merges into the roaring

mountain torrent and the tiny tottering child arrives, no less surely, at the majestic and stately developement of manhood.

Gentlemen, I trust it has been shown during this address, that for the art and science of medicine much has been done and is doing, and that there is every reason to hope, that still more may yet be accomplished.

In conclusion, I have trespassed long, and I fear wearily upon your time. If I have afforded you any amusement (instruction I cannot hope to have conferred) my object has been achieved; if on the contrary, I can but apologize and conclude with the assurance that I have done my utmost to excite your interest, and merit the attention with which you have been pleased to honor me; and believe me I shall ever esteem as one of the happiest days of my life, that on which I was permitted by your kind suffrages to address the members and friends of the "North London Medical Society."

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
North London Medical Society.

AT A GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY, FEBRUARY 8, 1854,

RICHARD QUAIN, ESQ., F.R.S., PRESIDENT,

IN THE CHAIR,

JOHN WARD, Esq., Senior Surgeon, to the East Cornwall Hospital; E. JOHN SPRY, Esq., Surgeon to the Royal Cornwall Infirmary; and SAMUEL HADWEN, Surgeon to the Lincoln Hospital, were elected Corresponding Fellows; and JOHN ZACHARIAH LAURENCE, Esq., an Ordinary Fellow.

The following Gentlemen were elected Officers of the Society for the ensuing year.

PRESIDENT.

RICHARD QUAIN, ESQ., F.R.S.

VICE-PRESIDENTS.

JOHN ERICHSEN, ESQ.

CHARLES HARE, M.D.

CHARLES TUNALEY, ESQ.

WALTER HAYLE WALSH, M.D.

TREASURER.

DONALD FRASER, M.D.

TRUSTEES.

NATHANIEL HENRY CLIFTON, ESQ. JAMES PART, ESQ.

SAMUEL SANDYS, ESQ.

HON-SECS.

WILLIAM ADAMS, ESQ.

EDWARD COUSINS, ESQ.

COUNCIL.

EDWARD BALLARD, M.D.

JOSEPH S. BALY, ESQ.

GEORGE BIRMINGHAM, ESQ.

JOSEPH BLACKSTONE, ESQ.

ROBERT GREENHALGH, M.D.

WILLIAM JENNER, M.D.

C. JAMES LORD, ESQ.

CLAUDIUS M. MILLER, M.D.

HENRY BURFORD NORMAN, ESQ.

HENRY A. RAWLINS, ESQ.

The Annual Oration was delivered by Dr. Greenhalgh.

The thanks of the Society were unanimously awarded to DR. GREENHALGH by acclamation.

The Society adjourned at 9 p.m.

The next Meeting of the Society will take place at 2, Cambridge Terrace, Camden Broadway, near the Railway Terminus, on Wednesday, March 8th, when a paper will be read by MR. HENRY THOMPSON "On certain affections hitherto known under the term 'Irritation of the Urinary Bladder.'"

DR. FRASER will read "Notes of a case of Spina bifida."

MR. HAINWORTH will read "Notes of a rare case of Pelvic Abscess."

The Chair will be taken at half-past Seven.

The Council will assemble at Seven on the same Evening.

Notices.

Fellows of the Society who have not received copies of Laws, and Cards of Meetings, are requested to give notice of the omission to the Secretaries.

Fellows wishing to introduce papers to the Society, are requested to give early notice of their intention in writing to the Secretaries, and to state the nature of the subject.

Notice of the intention to exhibit Pathological specimens should be given to one of the Secretaries in writing, before the commencement of the Meeting.

The Annual Dinner was held at the Grosvenor

The thanks of the Society were unanimously accorded to Dr. Cunningham for his contribution.

The dinner was held at 8 p.m.

The next Meeting of the Society will take place at 8.30 o'clock on Wednesday, 14th May, when a paper will be read by Mr. Henry Thomas on "The History of the Grosvenor Park and the History of the Grosvenor Estate."

Dr. Thomas will read "Notes of a visit to the Grosvenor Estate."

Mr. H. Thomas will read "Notes of a visit to the Grosvenor Estate."

The dinner will be held at half past seven.

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