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by George Wallis.**

**Contributors**

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# ANNUAL ORATION,

*Delivered March 8th, 1790,*

BEFORE THE

## MEDICAL SOCIETY,

BOLT COURT, FLEET STREET, LONDON,

BY

GEORGE WALLIS, M. D.

ONE OF THE FELLOWS,

AND

LECTURER ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF PHYSIC.

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Medico diligenti, priusquam conetur ægro adhibere Medicinam, non solum  
Morbus ejus cui mederi volet, sed etiam CONSUETUDO VALENTIS, &  
NATURA CORPORIS, cognoscenda est. CICER. ORAT.

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR G. G. J. AND J. ROBINSON, PATER-NOSTER ROW.

M.DCC.XC.

ANNUAL ORATION

BEFORE THE

MEDICAL SOCIETY

HOLT COURT, FLEET STREET, LONDON

BY

GEORGE WALLIS, M.D.

ONE OF THE FELLOWS

AND

LECTURER ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF MEDICINE

Medico diligenti, philosophum consuevit agere alibi in Medicinis non solum  
Modus ejus est modestus, sed etiam Constantis Vallis, &  
Natura Corporis, cognoscenda est.  
Cler. Gent.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR C. J. AND J. ROBINSON, PATERNOSTER ROW.

M.DCCC.

## P R E F A C E.

WHEN the members of the Medical Society, on the day of my delivering this Oration before them, did me the honor to request its publication, I considered the request as a complimentary custom usual on that occasion, and as such received it; however, on a second and third application, by order of their Council, amongst whom freedom of debate on any subject is expected, and all compliment and ceremony incompatible with their characters in that department, I was induced to believe that they might have perceived some hints, at least, not unworthy further consideration; and, notwith-

standing, I had at first asked permission to make such additions, as to me appeared requisite, on finding they would be infinitely too diffusive for a work of this nature, and as I could claim protection only by adhering strictly to those sentiments and opinions which were to them delivered, and upon which they could alone found a wish for my making them more public ; in that state I now offer them without alteration, reserving the elucidation of several parts for some future occasion, as they form the basis of a larger work, which I have an intention of completing as I can find opportunity.

Should therefore the following sheets, which now make their appearance to the world, in compliance with the desire of the Medical Society, fortunately add the slightest ray of consequence to that collective Body, and afford the candid Reader satisfaction, my labor will be amply compensated ; particularly as,

at

at the same time, it will evince the deference I pay to the Impartiality—Judgement—and Abilities of several Members of that institution—as well as the sense of that duty I owe to the Community in general.

G. W.

ANNUAL

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general.

G. W.

## ADDENDUM.

After "heart," in Page 37, line 7, insert "muscular fibres."

ANNUAL

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## ANNUAL ORATION.

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*Gentlemen, and Fellow-Associates !*

AS I consider this institution formed on the broad basis of universal good, the parent of general utility, not of selfish ostentation ; and as this, with its sister kingdoms, may be justly stiled the emporium of medical knowledge, where many of its members, the brightest luminaries of the Hippocratic school, have not disdained to convey their discoveries to the world in the common language of this country—a language, if not esteemed so concise and elegant, yet full as comprehensive, *full* as replete with descrip-

tive powers, as any of which Greece or Rome could ever boast; and as it must be allowed, that opinions in any art ought to be delivered in modes divested of all ambiguity and embarrassment, certainly, considering our own vernacular language possessed of these advantages, as being the most familiar to a very great majority of this audience, *though learned*, before which I have the honor to present myself, and perfectly understood by all — it will not, I hope, be construed want of respect, or a careless inattention to the consequence and dignity ever annexed to professional bodies thus associated, that I have presumed to deviate from some of my predecessors, dropping the tinselled trappings of Roman grace, for the plain, but more useful ornament of English perspicuity; and making use of a vehicle, easy, as common, to communicate my observations, in order that I might, through the whole of them, be readily followed, and not in any part misunderstood.

For however familiar may be the Latin idiom to readers conversant in that language — however easy to comprehend in its nicest points — to auditors, not constantly habituated to that style of delivery, the familiarity, and ready comprehension, would be defective.

On these considerations I found some small claim to your approbation ; and, considering the arduousness of the present undertaking, I flatter myself, I shall still farther experience your indulgence. Unimpressed with this idea, insurmountable indeed would have been the difficulties which presented themselves to my reflection ; but conscious that liberality of sentiment, with men of erudition, directs the judgement, and softens the severity of criticism, every obstacle vanished, and diffidence gave way to duty. For it has ever been, *with me*, a fixed principle, and laid down as a law immutable ; That, as every individual in the medical hemisphere is so closely, and so necessarily united to the

welfare of mankind, he is bound by the strongest ties, natural and social, to exert his abilities, however weak, when called to promote any laudable purpose.

Connected therefore as I am with the members of this medical institution — *with you*, who actuated by philanthropy, make science the pleasurable labour of your lives — and that part of science your particular study, the most noble which can engage the pursuit of man — framed by Divine Wisdom for the relief and preservation of the human species — preventing, mitigating, and subduing many of their corporal calamities — your wishes I considered as a mandate — and, as you have thought proper to elect me to this office of honor — an office, which would have been far better supplied by many of your associates — It became me, therefore, to reflect, what there was in my power to offer, which might in some, though perhaps too small a degree, compensate for your loss of time and attention to  
the

the consequential avocation of your professions, which candour would subject you to on this occasion.

Conversant as you are with, assiduously engaged in, the acquisition of medical knowledge, and happy in the promulgation, *two points* fell only to my election; either to furnish *something new*, for the improvement: or *something* to clear what might retard and clog the progress of the healing art.

Of the former, I fear, I have little to lay before you worthy of your attention; even vanity cannot suggest to, or persuade, me, that any thing has occurred to my observation, with which you may not, perhaps, have been long acquainted — My animadversions must therefore, in a great measure, be confined to the latter; wherein I shall only presume to offer some hints, which taken into the consideration of superior abilities, may assist, so am I led to hope, in extending our particular art to that goal  
of

of perfection, at which human exertions are limited only to arrive.

And, as many obstacles have been thrown in the way, which have prevented us from rising to that achme, as much as human endeavours, united with strong mental powers and indefatigable assiduity, judiciously conducted, would have accomplished; the greatest of which has been the thirst after theoretic knowledge — it might appear necessary to take a survey of the progress of the medic art, from the time of the divine old man, the first founder of systematic physic, to the present æra, in which some possess *no less merited, no less exalted characters*. But to an audience like this, so well versed in the history of physic, and all its branches, it would properly be considered, a work of presumption and supererogation.

I shall therefore only, as it is necessarily connected with my subject, take a concise view of the

means by which HIPPOCRATES acquired his knowledge, extensive as it was, considering the period in which he lived — in the same manner, shew how his successors rather retarded than promoted the utility of the Æsculapian Art, particularly as some of our Professors steer not altogether clear of similar errors; and then attempt to point out, where some of our present modes require the aid of correction.

HIPPOCRATES enriched his mind from observation, and founded his practice on facts, simply as they appeared to him; who being blest with *quick* perception, *nice* discrimination, and *profound* sagacity, made such discoveries — deduced such certain consequences — and raised his superstructures on so solid a foundation, that he left behind him *stupendous* monuments of great abilities;—*Abilities*, so superior to his predecessors, and contemporaries, that future ages pursued with avidity, and retained with confidence, many documents framed *in the in-*  
*fancy*

*fancy* of his art — and happy had it been for later times, had his plan, simple and easy as it was, been religiously observed. But, alas! *Man*, as if unconscious of his own weakness, *vain enough* to suppose he could discover the *arcana nature* — investigate first causes — and carry his curious eye into the darkest labyrinths, began to prefer ingenuity to observation; and mounted on the wings of false fame, disregarded the humble paths of modest inquiry, and built on vain and conjectural hypothesis;—and what the result? Theory arose after theory; and each succeeding one, though it corrected the errors of that which had been before adopted, still, like its predecessor, sunk into oblivion; leaving behind few remains worthy of practical pursuit.—

Nor is it difficult to account for the cause, why such different consequences awaited these different modes.

HIPPOCRATES, it is said, by the most rigid observation of every action and motion of nature, *of things*  
*which*

*which did in reality exist*, acquired a wonderful knowledge of the genuine disposition of Diseases ; and by carefully comparing the same sort of distempers, and their various minute motions in different Patients, and *all* the circumstances and accidents, which usually preceded, and attended them ; he could readily foretel an approaching malady, and after its invasion give a right judgement of its progress and event.

As Nature terminated diseases, when left to herself, he observed her mode, *first* tracing the manner in which the symptoms, in those that were acute, succeeded one another ; hence arose his art of pre-faging, and thus he formed his method of curing them, by imitating Nature when she proved herself defective.—From these observations, he discovered the use of *Bleeding—Scarifications—Issues—Setons*, where, in similar complaints, Nature supplied HÆMORRHAGES, and ABSCESSSES—*Artificial Diarrhœas*, --*Sudorifics--Emetics--Diaphoretics--Diuretics*, &c. be-

cause he found she, by some of these means, relieved the constitution under particular circumstances: hence then he became her humble imitator, conscious, that she alone was the most judicious directress.

But the Theorists, forming of themselves a set of principles, PRINCIPLES, *the mere coinage of distempered reason*, from them deduced all their arguments, supported all their practice, and endeavoured to prove Nature obedient to laws so founded.

Hence the incongruous, elementary, atomical systems of *succeeding Sects* — hence the conceits of an *Helmont* — the whimficalities of a *Paracelsus* — hence a variety of *chemical chimæras*, and all the inconsistencies of *hydraulic*, and *mechanic subtlety*; and hence fell medicine into shameful disrepute, it becoming more the pride of cavilling scepticism, and scholastic vanity, to build ingenious, though fallacious doctrines, than after detecting error, labour-

ing to pursue Nature through her plain and humble paths.

And it appears astonishing to a reflecting mind, that notions so ridiculous, practices so absurd, should be countenanced in later times ; when it is known, that *all* the labours of the ancients, as well as moderns, are chiefly valuable for the simple recitals they contain, *founded* on observation, *collected* from appearances, and *delivered* with candour : hence the præeminence of an *Hippocrates, Aretæus, Trallian, Aurelianus, Celsus, Tulpius, Lommius, Morgagni, Sydenham*, and some others of more modern date ; whom to mention, might be considered as indelicate, and the result of adulation.

And indeed this simplicity, the more it is pursued, the more strongly it convinces us of its utility ; affording the most certain, perhaps the only proper, method of acquiring, and communicating medical information. For the theories of the present

day, though fraught with no small degree of plausibility, will not stand the test of critical inquiry; they *all* appear to be *too generally* applied, in fevers *particularly*.---Can we suppose, that in such, as from their commencement to their termination are attended with profuse sweating, or a moist soft skin, a constriction of the cuticular pores takes place?---In those, where the circulation is languid---the action of the vascular system torpid---the prostration of strength sudden and extreme, that an *active* stimulus is the cause?---Or, in those where no oppression, load, nausea, sickness at the stomach, or uneasiness in the intestines---no catarrhal or pulmonic affections manifest themselves, that they deduce their origin from too copious and morbid secretion of the mucus in those organs? Surely not. Yet, these, by different classes of practitioners, are considered as the proximate cause of febrile affections, and applied in common to all.

But

But within these mansions, such a theoretic cacothetes appears not to be nurtured. If we examine the nature of the proceedings within these walls adopted, what is the roof, by which we are sheltered, but that of an *ÆDES ÆSCULAPIANA*? If we advert to the public product of your application, what are your memoirs, so justly enumerated amongst the most valuable labours of the medic art, but the *TABULÆ ÆNEÆ TEMPLORUM*, ornamented by simplicity, and supported by truth.\*

Nor need we take up much time in furnishing proofs of the superiority of such a scheme over every other, which has been produced by the fertility of human invention.

View but our English Hippocrates, SYDENHAM; he, by recalling this mode, not only contended with, but conquered, a theoretic world, notwithstanding

\* It must be observed, that, at this period, the Author had not sent any papers on medical subjects to the Society.

the powerful opposition he met with, invidious, as violent; and we find his descriptions stand at this hour unshaken, nor can be overthrown but by the hand of Heaven, when medicine shall be no more. So firmly supported are they by unerring truth; so simply, yet so justly, are they delivered; that they are to all intelligible — by all valued — by all quoted: even those, who, wild with hypothesis, leave nothing behind them but reliques similar to these, which can attract our attention, or merit our observation.

Still, notwithstanding we are convinced of the deceptive notions by which some of our early predecessors were governed — notwithstanding we can view the efforts of our contemporaries not perfectly consistent in the application of their speculative opinions — notwithstanding the advantages, unknown to former ages, which daily are presented in every branch of medical philosophy; which are discoverable by flight observation, and may be truly arranged  
with

with the *causæ evidentes*. We avail not ourselves of these advantages, or apply them sufficiently, to render our *modus medendi* as perfect as it might be.

There is too great, too general a solicitude in searching after SPECIFICS, and inquiring into the nature of the *femina morbi*, as if the former did exist—or the latter were within the reach of human investigation. We seem to be more anxious about the AGENTIA MIRIFICA, than the AGENDA, as if the latter were completely understood; that they were is devoutly to be wished; for they come more materially under our consideration; at least it appears to me a truth irrefragable, that were we to pay the strictest attention to the constitution, study more minutely its parts, dependencies, moving powers and peculiarities, practice would be divested of many errors, with which it too unfortunately at present abounds.

However, that we may be enabled to prove the validity of this assertion, we shall attempt to shew

THE FALLACY OF THE FIRST OF THESE PURSUITS—  
THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF DEMONSTRATING THE NATURE  
OF THE SECOND, IN GENERAL—and, THE REAL UTI-  
LITY OF ATTENDING CLOSELY TO THE THIRD, AND  
ITS MODE OF BEING APPLIED, in order to add to the  
improvement of the Art.

And, FIRST,

No idea, perhaps, has done more real injury,  
than *that of Medicines acting specifically in conquering  
Diseases*—Of this truth, a very superficial examina-  
tion will convince us : for it retards our researches  
in investigating their full and true powers—it pre-  
vents us, consequently, from extending those powers  
so as to be as diffusively useful as they might—it  
lays the foundation for a thousand deceptions ;  
causing us to attribute particular consequences to ma-  
terials, which do not from thence, in reality, origi-  
nate, and keeping their true source hid from our ob-  
servation—nor is this all ; it does worse—it often,  
by occasioning delay, increases the malady, reme-  
dies

dies thus considered, are pretended to subdue, nay frequently generating disorders of a more deleterious nature ; overturning that first and salutary caution, which directs us in all our efforts, if we fail to do good, to do no harm.—“ *Is artis medicæ scopus est ; ut hominem a tot gravibus malis liberet ; ideoque Medicus nullo modo nocere, nedum Vitam destruere, aut Sanitatem lædere debet, utpote quum Medicina non nocendi, sed juvandi, sit Scientia.*”

HOFFMANNUS.

Indeed the mischief ceases not here ; it proves detrimental in another view ; for it places the credulous Philosopher, and Physician, on a footing with the impudent and ignorant Empiric, and too often throws such an odium on the Art itself, that Professors of the first eminence are frequently held in contempt, and treated with ridicule, by the injudicious and illiterate, who fly with confidence to the cabinet, and depend upon the presuming arrogance of every plundering impostor.

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Still,

Still, strange as may be the appearance, painful the reflection to an informed mind, why should it be matter of surprize? Do not the Physician and Medicafter too often assign the same reason for their success, THE SPECIFIC POWER OF THEIR APPLIED ANTIDOTE, and build on the same fortuitous exhibition? And under such circumstances, the modest diffidence of the one can never, with the million, stand against the bold bustling ignorance of the other—for men of weak discriminating powers, of which *nine tenths* of mankind consist, at least if we confine them to medical understanding, will give credit to the opinions of creatures of their own level, and place, as Indians with their painted pagods, confidence in, and pay large tribute to, things their folly and superstition have set up.

But notwithstanding the credulity in this point of many professors of the art, *Men* held in the highest estimation adopting such ideas, handing them down to posterity, and having them received by succeeding

ing generations—is it not singular, that not *one* specific has ever yet been discovered, out of the number which have acquired the appellation?

It has been, and is now, by some, thought due to the Bark in an intermittent fever—to Quicksilver and its preparations in the Syphilis; but in reality, even these merit no such distinction: for let us ask, Do they in all cases, as if possessed of specific power they would, become infallible? Or, will they by any means prevent the accession of these distempers? Practice proves the contrary; for they will not alone always cure these complaints—and men have been seized with intermittents whilst under a course of Bark—and the lues venerea with a mercuriated habit.

As well might modesty and judgement be united to the names of *M\*\*\*\*\**, *G\*\*\*\*\**, or *any other empirical depredators* with which this metropolis is loaded; as well might infallibility be added to

every nostrum-monger, as specific powers in curing diseases, *in all constitutions*, to any medicine.

Indeed, if we search into the practice of men highly elevated in their profession, who retain such a species of absurd faith, we shall find such glaring contradictions—circumstances militating so diametrically against, and so totally subversive of these opinions, that we must be convinced of the fallibility of such a dogma.

For it is not uncommon to have accounts published by some of the efficacy of a medicine in certain complaints, which cures, they tell us, SPECIFICALLY, to which are tacked a long catalogue of cases in proof; whilst at the same time, in the hands of others of equal eminence, tried under similar circumstances, no such surprizing effects are manifested. Need I, to what I have already mentioned, add the accounts of *arsenic*, *hemlock*, *deadly night-shade*, *henbane*, *flores cardamines*, *flores zinci*, *fossile alkali*,  
and

and some others, which have been foisted upon the world under such a pretence? All having worked miracles under the direction of some, whilst others have failed in the administration.

To what are we to attribute this diversification? Can we dispute the abilities of the authors? It would be considered presumptuous.—Can we doubt their veracity? It would be thought illiberal.—Dare we think they are attempting to acquire fame from false principles? It would be construed invidious.

What are we to conjecture? Certainly that no such specifics exist; and that those who were favourers of such an opinion, unwilling, or unable to pursue their researches, were happy in having so easy a support to rest upon; or, uninclined to lessen their consequence, by receding from sentiments once adopted, and publicly sanctioned by their fiat, condescended to suffer science to be cloathed in an unintelligible jargon, and lead men, credulous as them-

themselves, to believe it was impossible to proceed farther, pleased as well with the phantom, as the reality of knowledge. Hence was a check given to particular inquiries, by implicit confidence being paid to hoary-headed obstinacy, I had almost said, cunning, creeping under the cloak of false experience: hence was the healing art impeded in its progress by such a belief; and hence a few characters called great, made thousands appear little, and live in the shade of indolence and obscurity.

Examine but the works of *Galen*, *Diascorides*, *Oribasius*, *Messuë*, *Boerhaave*, and almost all the writers of the *Materia Medica* of former ages, and compare them, with what has been written by some of the latest authors, who have made real experience the test of their opinions, you will find, that a multiplicity of errors, from time to time, have been transmitted from one to another, forming a contemptible farrago of specific absurdities.—View but the imaginary powers bestowed on *BEZOAR* and *SAF-*

FRON,

FRON, two out of the numberless instances, which might be produced. What mighty virtues have not been attributed to the former, by men renowned for medical sagacity? So multifarious, so efficacious, that almost all powerful medicines, or, those imagined such, were called Bezoardics; and what from faithful experiment is it now proved? one of our most imperfect absorbents.

What has not been said of Saffron? Receiving for its supposed amazing specific powers, the pompous names, *Aroma Philosophorum—sanguis Herculis—Rex vegetabilium—Panacea vegetabilis—hortus Lætitiae—medicina Tristitiæ*—and many more, given in small quantities. Indeed the great BOERHAAVE considers a few drops of the extract of Saffron, inspissated only to the consistence of oil, and taken in a glass of rich wine, as highly exhilarant and cordial. How different from the experience of this day! for except in very large doses, saffron is not known to produce

produce any effects, and of these accounts are very rare and doubtful.

But as an apology for this credulity, might it not be called fanaticism? It has been asserted, that the means, by which medicines produced their effects, at least those to which were attributed a specific power, were impossible to be detected and accounted for; and indeed the same notion is too prevalent at this day, in many cases. To such a height is it carried, that an *arcanum scrophulosum* has been proposed *even* to the members of *this* Society; so flagrant is folly in her attempts, yet meets, nevertheless, with such enormous encouragement; and, though associated with ignorance, and supported by presumption, is so successful, it is no wonder that crude inexperience should be led to conclude he might palm his nostrum on this Institution; for great medic characters, so called at this time, we have seen swell the catalogues, and enrich the lists of great Impostors.

How-

However, to prove the fallacy of this opinion, let us examine one medicine, which has long been held replete with specific power, and which claims more the title, could such be allowed, than any other medicine with which we are acquainted, if we except Quicksilver; we shall by that means detect the errors accruing from such an idea, and perceive the benefits arising from the discovery of its true action—Benefits, which should stimulate us in all cases to similar inquiries: I mean the BARK.]

This was long considered to cure Intermittents *specifically*—that is, we know not how—by some latent inexplicable power; and indeed such was the confidence placed in this miraculous drug, so thought, incomprehensible as astonishing, that in cases of this kind, it was indiscriminately exhibited—though very often productive of great mischief—till from long continued, and often repeated trials, some of the more judicious observers found, that this specific power was not always in Intermittents an inoffen-

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five,

five, much less a certain curative agent, not even of the same complaint at different times in the same person: hence it became necessary to inquire, from whence this deviation arose, and in which state of the complaint it might be productive of the greatest success; and it appeared to be when the constitution had been harassed, and the vascular system so far oppressed, as to be debilitated by the preceding malady, or was, *ab initio*, in that state—For given at first, when the constitution was in full vigor, it produced very dangerous effects, converting quotidians, and tertians, into continued Fevers, aggravating, instead of alleviating the febrile symptoms, and forming a variety of other distressing consequences.

On considering these phenomena, it was manifest, that what was thought its specific power, depended upon some exertion which occasioned the system to act, under some circumstances, with too much force, by increasing the vascular tone.—Hence men, imbibing this idea, laboured to abate the activity of the

con-

constitution, by bleeding, purging, &c.—or suffered it to be weakened by delay, before they exhibited this medicine, which was then almost always successful, unless prevented by some constitutional defect, that at the same time required for its alleviation or subduction some attention.

It appears therefore obvious, that the virtue of this medicine lay not in its correcting or destroying the miasma, or virus, producing the Intermittent, but in the exertion of its tonic power; hence a peculiar state of the constitution was necessary,—and hence the necessity of knowing that state before we can promise success.

Thus we see the particular power of this *universally allowed specific* was developed, by observation and experience; and there remains no doubt of the Bark producing generally, I might have said always, the disagreeable, and sometimes dangerous effects above specified, if given too early, or persisted in—

without it brings on some debility at first, as it sometimes does, by becoming purgative : and it may be laid down as an invariable rule in practice, that where there is in the habit strong vascular action, and an inflammatory diathesis of the blood, which are, I take it, generally conjoined, Bark universally does harm, —where the contrary constitution is prevalent, universally good, if no topical defect impedes, or counteracts its action : nor does the Bark being successful in some local inflammatory complaints, at all invalidate the force of the argument ; for in those cases, the disorder itself is not an active, but a passive inflammation.

Similar arguments might be adduced to the same purpose, proving the known action of Quicksilver, and its saline compounds, capable of producing its good effects, instead of its imaginary *specific powers*, and of some others. But what I have advanced will, I hope, prove sufficiently satisfactory to shew, that by this idea of medicines acting specifically, no small  
 impe-

impediment has been thrown in the way of medical improvement: for men, satisfied with this *LUSUS*, this *LARVA RATIONIS*, practised from principles falsely founded, nay, *very often*, without any principles at all—occasioning great loss of time, and not only doing mischief by injudicious application, but keeping the extensive powers of many active medicines immersed in obscurity. Hence, those formerly administered in one malady only, to which their *specific power* was supposed to be singularly adapted, we now find, their modes of action being brought to light, in a variety of others extremely useful and inestimable.

Yet it is very extraordinary, that men flying from inquiries after properties it may be in their power to discover, should rush forward in pursuit of what lies far beyond their reach, the *NATURE OF THE SEMINA MORBI*, the second point appropriated for discussion.

That

That such an attempt should be made in the early periods of an art, while the professors were almost totally ignorant of the nature of the human machine, with regard to its moving powers, and sympathetic affections—knew little of the animal œconomy—of what different parts the body was formed; how they were actuated by each other, and by what laws they were governed—at a time when philosophy was searching after the Principia Rerum, is not to be wondered at.

But, considering this inquiry has been set on foot ever since the prevalence of Hippocrates' idea of the "*Calidum & falsum;—Calidum & acidum;—Calidum & amarum, & alia innumerabilia:*" a period of above two thousand years, and has ever continued in the same point of uncertainty. Is it not surprizing then, that men should for ages perplex themselves in the attempt to make discoveries, so much above the power of human understanding?—that they should vainly dissipate their time in endeavouring to detect

the component parts of materials, which are in general too minute to be collected—in all, too subtle to come within the limits of man's scrutinizing abilities?

Knowing these things, is it not still more astonishing to hear men talk of the acidity and alkalefescency of the materies morbi; and otherwise specifying the particular nature of the acrimony, productive of eruptive complaints? to assert positively, that the venereal virus is an alkali, and propose to cure disorders from that cause with muriatic acid, traversing through all the diversified mazes of the human body, and there making neutral salts by the specific combinations?

Yet, ridiculous as is this attempt; fantastic this enthusiasm, some modern anatomists hold up the certainty of such discoveries, and form from thence schemes of practice, curable and infallible, implanting in young inexperienced minds, an *IGNIS FATUUS*, unprofitable as visionary.

Let

Let Philosophers of such a description go in quest of atoms, and the diversified modification of matter, mount air balloons, seek medical knowledge in the clouds—*Astra petant, quomodo formentur*,—be it ours to inquire how the effects produced by matter, in its combined and morbid state, are to be remedied, and to such heated imaginations be the advice of CELSUS recommended.—“Rationalem quidem puto  
 “*medicinam esse debere; instrui verò ab evidenti-*  
 “*bus causis; obscuris omnibus, non à cogitatione*  
 “*artificis, sed ab ipsâ arte rejectis.*”—Advice, so pregnant with unerring truth;—fraught with such strong conviction, that on this point it is needless to dwell any longer—the futility of such inquiries—the impossibility of attaining the *quid desideratum*, are so conspicuously evident to the eye of common sense, *primâ facie*, that they need no arguments to be adduced in proof. For what understand we more of the particular nature of the virus creative of the Plague—Small Pox—Pemphigus—Cancer—than the

the first observers of these diseases?—Virus, which might be examined, if any could, from the copiousness of the matter produced: but we, like them, form our judgement only from the effects.

It will be more to our purpose to examine how much greater benefit will be derived to mankind, by paying attention to that, upon which, to be of any service, our applications must act; for certainly the *human machine itself* is the grand object of the Physician's consideration; and the *moving powers* of that instrument, with what I shall, for the present, call their *appendiculæ*, the things which require his attention, and which being too much neglected in our descriptions of cases, has retarded, and still retards the progress of the healing art.

By THE MOVING POWERS, I mean *the muscular Fibres and vascular System possessed of Irritability—the nervous System of Incitability*—and *the sanguinary*

*nary mass of Fluids, of the Vis animans & servans Naturam.*

By the APPENDICULÆ, the *Lungs, Stomach, Intestines, Uterus, Kidneys, &c.* parts which, affected, have some influence on the moving powers, with respect to their action. The *Brain, and Heart* I include in the nervous and vascular system.

By the incitability, as applied to the nerves, I would be understood that power which is capable of being put into action by immateriality, such as mental affection—sympathy; though it may be put into motion by material stimulus; to which Irritability, *itself abstractedly considered*, is only obedient; though that may be also roused by the connection of parts, wherein it resides, with the nervous system, and by means of the nerves thus put into action, and supported.

But,

But, in order to form a proper idea of what I mean for your consideration, I must beg leave to take a survey of the machine, according to my division, in the enjoyment of perfect health.

Now in this case, the principles of which it is formed, must be in a state exactly, or pretty nearly proportioned to each other; so that one may assist in promoting and supporting the vigor of the other, and producing those effects with ease, and constancy for which they were ordained.

The moving solids of the human machine must have such firmness, pliability, and elasticity, as to enable them to answer to the impulse of the given Irritability.

The Irritability of such a nature as to be kept in action by the nervous incitability.

The nerves to be so formed, as perpetually to supply their power, when and where wanted, with regularity.

The blood and fluids in such quantity, and of such consistency, as to receive the vis animans, retain and transfuse it through the whole system in an invariable current—and so bland, that they may produce no defect in the secretory or excretory organs, so as to impede them in their duty.

And the Appendiculæ, so complete in their powers, that they may perform their actions to which they are allotted, with constancy and freedom.

While matters are thus conducted, the machine remains in perfect health; but if a defect arises in one or more of these particulars, diseases succeed in proportion to the magnitude of the defect—and of different natures, agreeable to the parts affected, and their connections, and the changes brought on  
in

in them, which may be either partial or general, or idiopathic or symptomatic; and the cause of such defect will arise from the imperfections, in some of the sources, from whence the active powers deduce their origin, immediately or secondarily. And as we conclude, that the sources of all activity, are either the brain, medulla spinalis, heart, or blood—so in some of these we shall find something contrary to a state of nature, in its most perfect form; or a derangement in some of the appendiculæ, by which these sources are disordered.

But that I may be more perfectly understood, I shall trespass only a very little on your patience, to supply two or three short, though common, cases, by way of elucidation.

Suppose *a man of strong stamina—great vascular irritability—strong equable nervous incitability, abounding with blood, copious and tenacious*, has perspiration obstructed by what is called CATCHING COLD. We  
are

are all acquainted with the general result. The matter which ought to pass off by the perspirable pores, is retained in the habit ; the vascular system experiences a plenitude—a quick circulation is produced—Irritability increased—and febrile symptoms succeed: here the immediate source lies in the heart, and vascular system, excited by a stimulus from the occasional cause, constriction of the cuticular pores ; and that by the more remote, the application of cold ;—and if there should be in such a constitution, any defect in the brain, lungs, &c. or any other internal organ, or part, a topical affection will be the consequence of the inflammatory kind, which will increase and support the fever ; or should any of the organs be affected in the first instance, that affection will occasion the same effect ; and this arises also from the source above specified.

But should the remote cause operate on one, *of a weak—relaxed habit—possessed of quick nervous incitability, but a small portion of vascular irritability, and a thin*

*a thin state of fluids, with a paucity of blood; the consequences will not be so violent—The febrile affections will be of the slow kind, attended with more nervous symptoms, the pulse will be quick, but languid; the heat in a small degree increased, but not so permanent, accompanied by spasms of various parts; depression or sinking of the spirits, and seldom any topical inflammation—here then the nervous system will be more affected, discovered by the languor of the moving powers, load, and heaviness of the head, coldness of the extremities, and such other symptoms, as indicate THE SOURCE OF MOTION, the nervous System, the part oppressed.*

But suppose, lastly, *a Man of good stamina, with a weak vascular Irritability, tho' steady, nervous Incitability, and Blood of a tolerable density, and in moderate quantity, under the present circumstances—what will from thence occur?*

The

The circulation of the Blood will not be so greatly accelerated, as in the first instance—the extremities will be cold—the perspiration obstructed, though not in so great a degree—uneasy sensations of coldness, and heaviness of the head—disturbed and restless nights—oppressions on the præcordia—chillness, and flushings of heat not continued, or regular—dejection of spirits—and affections, somewhat approaching to delirium.

Thus we find, from the *same immediate cause*, different effects will be produced; and they may be varied, as the different combinations in the constitution happen—and we must to this add, as the blood and fluids are in such a particular state to receive the vis animans more or less copiously, or to transfuse it more or less freely, the effects may be increased or diminished in a proportionate degree—or as it may be, more or less acrimonious, for acrimony always adds a stimulus, particularly to the vascular system. Though some may exert at the  
same

same time as a sedative power on the nerves, and therefore the additional stimulus not be so perceptible.

Besides, we know that the intestines, lungs, liver, kidneys, bladder, uterus, &c. have such universal connections with the whole machine, particularly the two former, that they can in many instances transmit their affections sympathetically to the whole, or some parts of the body which lie at a distance ; hence then, as they are more or less affected, so will be the moving powers in adequate proportions : instances of which are observable in some symptomatic, inflammatory, catarrhal, hectic, remittent, verminose fevers, &c.

Now, as is the nature of the moving powers ; as are the different combinations ; as is the state of the fluids, with respect to their acrimony or blandness, texture, and capability of receiving and transfusing the vis animans ; as is the state of the appendiculæ

and muscular stamina, so do constitutions vary, and so are different effects produced by similar causes; which we see often occur in epidemic, and other complaints, where, though the leading symptoms may be similar in a great degree, the concomitants will be different, and put on various appearances, as we find in the recitals of the same complaints by different authors: hence arise many of the species and varieties of different genera of diseases; hence a deviation in our *modus medendi*, and hence the good effects of one medicine in some instances at one time, which produce no such benefit at another, in complaints considered as similar: and hence, perhaps, also arise the good or bad effects of the same medicine given in different doses, and likewise the necessity of forming different combinations to make it act with certainty and success in different constitutions.

Let us, therefore, take a survey of the effects of medicines in different doses, or differently combined,

bined, and see what conclusions we may from thence deduce.

Opium, in full doses, instead of proving anti-spasmodic, anodyne, or narcotic, has often created other distressing symptoms; and so far from taking off spasms, alleviating pain, or procuring sleep, occasioned nausea, vertigo, and restlessness, whilst in smaller doses it has procured every desired purpose.

Mercury also, given in a similar manner with respect to the dose, has also occasioned disagreeable consequences, instead of affecting the salivary system, its chief scene of action, producing nausea, gripings, and bloody stools, whilst in smaller doses, it has readily been absorbed into the habit, and gradually brought on a ptyalism, nay often cured without any perceptible effect.

Under the same circumstances, Bark has been the cause of sickness, purging, and constantly rejected

by vomiting ; producing not any of its salutary effects, either by prolonging the apyrexia, or taking off the febrile affections, which have been accomplished by cold or hot infusions of this medicine.

On the contrary, small doses of these very active materials have been productive of no sensible or curative effect sometimes, whilst administered in larger doses, their good consequences have been made manifest.

And again : It is indisputably true, that these medicines given in any quantity or form, they may, the most perfectly agreeable to the constitution, and without having any painful concomitant circumstances attendant, have by no means answered the desired purpose ; but being joined with other remedies, have proved successful.

What then can be the cause of these deviations ?  
Is it in the medical ingredient itself ? Impossible—

For

For every medicine considered in itself, *ceteris paribus*, must always be alike ; its action must be invariably the same ; and in similar constitutions, or in the same constitutions under similar circumstances must universally produce the same effects.

Though I am well aware it may be urged, that the same medicine in the same person has appeared to act, as if it varied its mode of action ; this will be readily granted—but then it has been owing to some change brought upon the habits by illness, indiscretion, or some other cause.

For medicines producing in a state of full health one effect, will create others in a state of illness, with respect to the constitution ; though the action of the medicine must be the same.—For the constitution labouring under an indisposition, its powers are altered, they act not under a state of healthful nature, but require something to relieve and regulate them—Now the same medicine which relieves,  
and

and regulates them, during the illness, would, when the illness was conquered, and the powers of the constitution returned to their natural order, or standard, produce bad effects if continued, inasmuch as the same action of a medicine in illness, producing the same effect on the habit, brings that habit into a state of health by that very action ; which action, the body being in an healthful state, is too powerful ; for it then needing no such aid, would have its powers too much increased, and by that means distress from that very source would be occasioned. —The same argument may be made use of, where debilitating means have been applied, in order to reduce the too active powers of the habit, morbidly affected.

From what has been advanced I conclude, therefore, that the cause of these deviations depend solely on the state of the constitution, and by no means on the nature of the medicine.

Now,

Now, as I consider the action of medicines, and the femina morbi, to be exactly under the same point of view, regarding their respective operations on the machine, and effects produced—I say, these depend totally on the nature of the constitution operated upon—for instance,

If a *Man of strong stamina, great vascular irritability, steady, regular, nervous incitability, firm texture of the blood*, was to be seized with an intermittent fever, of the quotidian or tertian type, from marsh miasma—in order to form his cure, the vascular irritability must be abated, the too strong tone of the solids, and muscular fibres in some degree debilitated, and the cohesive power of the blood weakened—by bleeding, purging, cooling, saline medicines, antimonial diaphoretics ; — which done, the Bark might afterwards be administered. And if a man of a similar constitution takes so large a quantity of heating stimulants as to produce the same febrile appearances, without intermission — the treatment

would

would be the same.—Not from the miasmata, or stimulants, having produced these effects—but from the same constitutional causes.

But was the marsh miasma to affect a *man of debilitated habit, weak nervous incitability, and enfeebled vascular irritability, with a loose texture of the sanguinary mass*—cordial, nervous medicines with the use of blisters might be added to the use of the Bark ; and these would be required from constitutional causes also,—that the constitution itself might be roused to feel the tonic power of that remedy, and experience its good effects.

A variety of other instances might be offered in proof of the same positions—and this mode of reasoning will be found applicable to almost all cases ; particularly, all such as are general in the habit, or are owing to general affections : and the more it is examined into, the more the propriety and necessity of paying particular attention to what has been

specified will appear ; but what has been said will, I hope, be sufficient to supply the proposed hints, and lead me to my last proposition.

*“ That one present source of retarding the progress  
“ of the medic art, is the loose and neglectful manner  
“ in which cases and their modes of cure, or want of  
“ success, are described.”*

It has, I flatter myself, been clearly proved, as far as the time allotted upon this occasion will permit, that the constitution, with its different divisions, require the first attention of the Physician ; and it will readily occur, that in practice it is to be considered not only collectively, but abstractedly ; that it should be found out in what part the constitution is most defective, whether respecting its *nervous Incitability—vascular Irritability—muscular Strength—texture or composition of the Blood—and Fluids—and the Appendiculæ.*

For as all the parts act in combination with each other, as they transmit to each other the principle of their power, yet may experience separate affections inherent in themselves, which may be generally or partially communicated, creative of general or partial disturbance — they should always be particularly attended to: inasmuch as the neglect of some, may occasion too often our endeavours to become abortive..

But we find commonly too little said on the prevalent peculiarities of the constitution, upon which different medicines have been tried in similar diseases, wherein they have sometimes proved successful, sometimes otherwise.

Now, as medicines act differently in different quantities—with different combinations—in different constitutions—in the same constitutions at different periods—in the same disease at the different times of the malady, with regard to the good or bad effects

effects they produce — and as this apparent difference of action depends upon the different states of the moving powers, and what I call their appendiculæ, the constitutional peculiarities should always be nicely discriminated.

This mode would often enable us to discover, on what account various remedies had been successful; wherein they had failed, and direct us to the best method of selecting and combining medicines, and of curing diseases, such as fall immediately under the Physician's care; and assist, in most, to which the Surgeon lays claim, as little, very little is to be done with the *femina morbi*, and the specific power of our remedies is merely ideal. For as is the state of the moving powers and fluids, with their combinations, so will be the action of our medicines, and consequently so will be the indications in our applications.

Permit me, before I conclude, to offer a case, by way of exemplification, which will afford, I presume, no weak proof of what has been advanced.

Mr. \*\*\*\*\*, a person of middle age, had been some time afflicted with a disease, similar to what is termed GONORRHÆA LIBIDINOSA.

His muscular stamina were tolerably good; he had a great deal of nervous incitability; weak vascular irritability; the texture of the blood not firm, nor could be called broken; his digestion, tho' his appetite was tolerable, defective; he had now and then chilliness, succeeded by flushing heats, which came on irregularly; his pulse in general was slow, and undulating; and when quickened, as it would now and then be, on some extraordinary occasions, weak; his viscera all appeared sound;

\* Though delicacy prevents the insertion of the Name, still any medical Gentleman, desirous of further information, may acquire it by application to the author, who, for the sake of accuracy, read this account three times to the patient, and he, *at that time*, perfectly coincided with the exactitude of the description.

his bowels very irregular, sometimes extremely constive, at others as much the reverse—always in one extreme or the other ; his urine pale, and limpid for the most part, but now and then depositing a whitish, furfuraceous, mucilaginous sediment—he was petulant, and irascible when trifles perplexed him ; when not, timid and despairing—his fluids were acrimonious ; his memory weak, and his recollection painful ; creative of much uneasiness, when he could not bring to his mind that of which he was in quest—his whole frame was in general so languid, that slight motion greatly fatigued him ; his extremities were in general cold—in easterly or south-west winds he always complained of being worse, and was perceptibly so—his nights were constantly restless—he had sometimes two or three emissions in the night ; complained of partial heat at the lower part of the back, which he said, now and then, transfused itself all over him, and made him extremely faint—he was never thirsty.

In this state he had continued for ten months, though now visibly growing worse, and had been under the care of two physicians of eminence: they had put him under a course of restraining medicines — bark, white vitriol, ginseng, &c. and ordered him the cold bath; but all proved ineffectual.

At this period, his constitution was considered in general after the mode above recommended; taking in also the topical affection—a weakness of the femoral vessels, and determination of the fluids to those parts creating heat, and causing emissions.

**The INDICATIONS OF CURE were,**

*To determine the Fluids externally, by increasing Perspiration—to strengthen the digestive Organs—increase the Irritability of the vascular system—abate the nervous Incitability—and give tone and firmness to the habit in general, which were accomplished by cordial saline diaphoretics, warm tonics, camphorated*

and æthereal anti-spasmodics, and stomachic bitters—keeping the body moderately and gently open by mild aperients.

Under this method, his extremities first lost their coldness, in a great degree, and when warm, he always found himself relieved; at which time there was a great itching in his skin, which was distended, appearing like an universal effera, the matter by a general stimulus under the skin, elevating the whole surface regularly, not shewing any eruptions, except here and there, one now and then, on his breast, or on the lower part of the head, just above the neck, at the roots of the hair. He began now to recover every day, and when his system shewed it was in some degree invigorated, bathing in the Thames and riding exercise established his cure.

The reason why the former Gentlemen had been so long unsuccessful, appears very obvious: they had not paid any attention to the torpid state of the

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the vascular system, on which account the fluids were always crowding upon the internal parts, having their acrimony increased; and the astringent medicines, not being capable of exerting their action, from a defect of vascular irritability, the vessels being in such a state of torpor, as not to feel the effects.

Hence the feminal vessels, being before in a weakened state, suffered a partial irritation, by the fluids there collected, occasioning stimulus, and increased heat — emissions succeeded emissions — the machine became more and more debilitated — the nervous incitability increased; the consequence of which would soon have been a hectic fever with a tabes.

Would time permit, a variety of cases might be adduced, in which similar success from similar reasons have confirmed the validity of a practice so founded — and I am fully persuaded, that in all our  
recitals

recitals of cases, whether successfully or unsuccessfully treated, were we to advert to what, perhaps, by some may be considered as minutiae too trifling in the present scale of physic, we should find, as well from one as the other, much useful matter proceeding—And I have no doubt but we should discover, in very many, if not in all, the reasons why accounts so similar in their descriptions, so dissimilar in their consequences, have, and do present themselves daily to our view.

But I flatter myself, what has been already advanced will be sufficient to afford hints, that may induce some more capable to attempt the investigation, and give still clearer views than lies within the compass of my very limited knowledge: I shall, therefore, conclude in the words of a favorite author, as they are expressive of my wishes—“ Non  
 “ dicam, quod ad commodiorem & certioreme-  
 “ dendi methodum nihil exinde inveniri possit. Doc-  
 “ trinam itaque, quemadmodum cum praxi cohæreat,

“ & quæ utilitas in certam & compendiosam medendi  
 “ methodum inde redundet, non hominum ad judi-  
 “ candum ineptorum; non juvenum & in praxi planè  
 “ inexercitatorum, non sectariorum, & qui veras de-  
 “ monstrandi, & logicas regulas ignorant; sed ves-  
 “ tro, VIRI SOLIDISSIMA PERITIA ET ERUDITIONE IN-  
 “ STRUCTI, judicio, candori, atque integritati, nec  
 “ non attentiori meditationi atque experientiæ etiam  
 “ atque etiam commendo.”

FINIS.