

## **The late Mr. Abernethy / [John Abernethy].**

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Naval Anecdotes.

A lady in full feather approached the captain of a ship —  
"Keep all there," cried Pat; "keep all."  
"Paw, sir," exclaimed the mortified dame, "do you know who  
I am?"  
"Search me, know," rejoined Pat.  
"Not for me, sir?"  
"The devil knows!"  
"Not for admiral's wife, sir?"  
"Not for all I know, is you is not one of the admiral's wives?"

GOOD PURSUAISON.—Nothing is more amusing than the alacrity of  
humans in getting into scrapes, and the happy manner and bloodless  
means of which they endeavour to extricate themselves.

A captain of a man-of-war, newly appointed to a ship on the Irish  
coast, took the precaution, on "beating out" of harbour, to appoint  
a pilot that he was totally unacquainted with the coast, and more-  
over, was entirely on the pilot's local knowledge for the safety  
of the ship.

"You are perfectly sure, pilot," said the captain, "your way well  
acquainted with the coast?"

"Do I know my own name, Sir?"

"Well, mind I warn you not to approach too near to the shore."

"Now make yourself easy, Sir; in truth you may go to bed if  
you like."

"Then, shall we stand on?"

"Why,—what else would we do?"

"Yes; but there may be hidden dangers, which you know nothing  
of."

"Dangers!—I like to see the dangers dare baffle themselves from  
me.—Sure, didn't I tell you I know every rock on the coast,  
where the ship strikes?—and that's one of 'em!"

W. N. G.

1831.

In ancient Rome, when liberty was lost,  
And was to be regained at any cost,  
A bold conspiracy was slyly hatch'd  
By men, in this reforming age unsuited;  
Brutus and Cassius for Rome conspired,  
And when the former struck, Caesar expired.  
But now, in more refined and stirring times,  
Fought with the wealth and arms of distant climes,  
Brutus with Caesar joins, for Rights and Laws,  
We say, Amen! the Gods adopt your cause.



## THE LATE MR. ABERNETHY.

THE influence which the name of Abernethy has with the public at large, is such as to have always created an eagerness to know what he ate and drank himself, and what he generally recommended, as if all classes of persons, all modes of life, and all constitutions required to be nourished upon the same plan. The absurdity of this notion has been well pointed out by Dr. Paris in his Treatise upon Diet, in which this learned physician accommodates his precepts to individual circumstances, without laying down a general rule. The public are apt to run after systems of diet as they do after *cures*, and religiously abstain from proscribed dishes and drinks, or adhere tenaciously to such as have received the stamp of approbation from some distinguished medical writer; so that any great medical authority may find it as easy to expel a certain article of diet from common use, or introduce another, as Swift did, by virtue of his name, to persuade the people that an expected eclipse of the moon was put off by order of the Dean of St. Patrick! We know an instance of Christmas turkeys and sausages having been peremptorily forbidden to enter the house again after the appearance of Sir Anthony Carlisle's imbecile book upon diet and old age; and the savory little side-dish of minced veal, long a favorite with the lady of the house, was ordered to be discontinued, until the period arrived when she had no teeth to masticate more solid substances. At this moment the public are deceived by supposing that a certain biscuit, abhorrent to *our* olfactory and gustatory senses, was the favorite breakfast and luncheon of Mr. Abernethy, whose name it bears, because the honest baker who invented it was called Abernethy, as many of our northern neighbors are. We venture to affirm, no such *trash* ever entered the worthy professor's stomach, and we know that what are called *tops and bottoms* were his choice, sometimes soaked in tea or eaten dry. Those therefore who have eaten 'Abernethy biscuits' more upon principle than inclination, had better follow the example of a good old lady of our acquaintance who took a year or two's supply of 'Scott's Pills' over again, because during that period she discovered, from the result of an action at law, that she had been taking not the *real* 'Scott's Pills,' but sundry boxes-full of a forged and spurious source of digestion in imitation of the true Scott. The fact is, that Mr. Abernethy was a man of common sense, with all his eccentricities and enthusiasm when upon his *hobby*, and usually fed like other people, though perhaps a little more cautiously than the generality. He used to enforce his precepts for the benefit of those who were invalids, and such as exceeded in diet, and pointed out that which we all must acknowledge to be true, that the indulgence in luxurious living is a common vice, leads to disorders of health, and tends more or less to shorten the duration of human life.

Few persons in the history of modern medicine have enjoyed so widely spread a reputation as the subject of this brief memoir. In his own profession as a surgeon, he was estimated most highly, on account of his long and ardent devotion to his art, which he strove to improve wherever doubts and difficulties offered themselves. His views of surgery were perfectly philosophical, although marked by a charac-



ter which seemed to waver between evidences of great genius and eccentricity, almost amounting at times to a manner bordering upon a minor degree of mental insanity. Great, however, as was his enthusiasm upon his favorite topics, he was in reality a safe and judicious practitioner, whenever his mind could be brought to bear upon a case. His practice was never characterised by rashness of treatment, or experimental resources, but it was too frequently, perhaps, prejudiced by one prevailing theory. This theory he adopted by a constant habit of referring disorders to some constitutional derangement, arising from impaired or vitiated digestion; and the manner in which he sometimes sought to relieve a local affection, by attacking the bowels, gave a ludicrous air to his practice, and frequently impressed the patient with a want of confidence in his skill and knowledge.

As a physiologist, his views of life were rational and philosophical. He was a great admirer of John Hunter, and opposed every effort that was attempted to establish those doctrines of materialism which emanated from the French school of the last century.

Mr. Abernethy was one of the best examples of the absurdity of separating the practice of surgery from physic by any determinate bounds. He showed in his different publications that the limits of surgery were not confined to the external parts of the body, and that when these were affected, the constitution suffered more or less either in cause or effect. He showed that while the eye of the surgeon was upon the local disease, it must also be directed generally to the whole internal system.

As a lecturer in anatomy and surgery, Mr. Abernethy was interesting, instructive, clear, and amusing, but never eloquent. His manner was peculiar, abrupt, and conversational; and often when he indulged in episodes and anecdotes, he convulsed his class with laughter, especially when he used to enforce his descriptions by earnest gesticulation. Frequently while lecturing, he would descend from his high stool, on which he sat with his legs dangling like a child, to exhibit to his class some peculiar attitudes and movements illustrative of the results of different casualties and disorders; so that a stranger coming in, unacquainted with the lecturer's topics, might easily have supposed him to be an actor entertaining his audience with a monologue after the manner of Mathews or Yates. This disposition indeed gave rise to a joke among his pupils of '*Abernethy at Home*,' whenever he lectured upon any special subject. In relating a case, he was seen at times to be quite fatigued with the contortions into which he threw his body and limbs; and the stories he would tell of his consultations, with the dialogue between his patient and himself, were theatrical and comic to the greatest degree.

At one period of his popularity and zenith as a lecturer upon the subject of the disorders of health, his pupils regarded his doctrines with such devotion as implicitly to practice the precepts they contained with respect to rigid abstinence in diet. And when *blue pill* was sure to be referred to in every lecture, and in every case, the pupils were known to carry it about them, spread it upon bread instead of butter, smear their tongues with it, or swallow a pill occasionally.

In his own adoption of the system he recommended, he at one time



was very rigid, and has been known to go home to dinner about eleven or twelve o'clock; and a friend, calling upon him after he had dined, once found him extended upon the rug before the fire, rolling himself backwards and forwards to promote digestion. He was also once met pacing up and down the street without any apparent object, which he explained by saying, that he he was endeavouring to get rid of his *irritability*. This term did not refer to that moral state of the mind which we consider as commonly belonging to temper, but arose from a theory he entertained relative to *muscular irritability*, which he supposed either to be in excess or otherwise, as bodies become positively or negatively electrified; and he considered that repose could not be enjoyed until the irritability was exhausted or diminished by bodily exercise—an universal sensation thus philosophically explained.

Mr. Abernethy however, although amiable and good-natured, with strong feelings, possessed an irritable temper, which made him very petulant and impatient at times with his patients and medical men who applied to him for his opinion and advice on cases. When one of the latter asked him once whether he did not think that some plan which he suggested would answer, the only reply he could obtain was, "Aye, aye, put a little salt on a bird's tail and you'll be sure to catch him." When consulted on a case by the ordinary medical attendant he would frequently pace the room to and fro with his hands in his breeches' pockets, and *whistle* all the time, and not say a word, but to tell the practitioner to go home and read his book. "*Read my book*" was a very frequent reply to his patients also, and he could seldom be prevailed upon to prescribe or give an opinion if the case was one which appeared to depend upon improper dieting. A country farmer of immense weight came from a distance to consult him, and having given an account of his daily meals, which showed no small degree of addiction to animal food, Mr. Abernethy said, "Go away, Sir, I won't attempt to prescribe for such a *hog*."

He was particular in not being disturbed during meals; and a gentleman having called after dinner, he went into the passage, put his hands upon the gentleman's shoulders, and turned him out of doors. He would never permit his patients to talk to him much, and often not at all; and he desired them to hold their tongues and listen to him, while he gave a sort of clinical lecture upon the subject of the consultation. A loquacious lady having called to consult him, he could not succeed in silencing her without resorting to the following expedient: "Put out your tongue, Madam." The lady complied.—"Now keep it there till *I* have done talking." Another lady brought her daughter to him one day, but he refused to hear her or to prescribe, advising her to make the girl take exercise. When the guinea was put into his hand, he recalled the mother and said, "Here, take the shilling back, and buy a *skipping-rope* for your daughter as you go along." He kept his pills in a bag, and used to dole them out to his patients, and on doing so to a lady who stepped out of a coronetted carriage to consult him, she declared they made her sick, and she could never take a pill. "Not take a pill! what a *fool* you must be," was the courteous and conciliatory reply to the countess. When the late Duke of York consulted him, he stood whistling with his hands in his pockets, and the Duke said, "I sup-



pose you know who I am." The uncourtly reply was, "Suppose I do—what of that?" His pithy advice was, "Cut off the *supplies*, as the Duke of Wellington did in his campaigns, and the enemy will leave the citadel." When he was consulted for lameness following disease or accidents, he seldom either listened to the patient or made any inquiries, but would walk about the room imitating the gait peculiar to different injuries, for the general instruction of the patient. A gentleman consulted him for an ulcerated throat, and, on asking him to look into it, he swore at him, and demanded how he dared to suppose that he would allow him to blow his stinking foul breath in his face! A gentleman who could not succeed in making Mr. Abernethy listen to a narration of his case, and having had a violent altercation with him on the subject, called next day, and, as soon as he was admitted, he locked the door and put the key into his pocket, and took out a loaded pistol. The professor, alarmed, asked if he meant to rob or murder him. The patient, however, said he merely wished him to listen to his case, which he had better submit to, or he would keep him a prisoner till he chose to relent. The patient and the surgeon afterwards became most friendly towards each other, although a great many oaths passed before peace was established between them.

This eccentricity of manner lasted through life, and lost Mr. Abernethy several thousands a year perhaps. But those who knew him were fully aware that it was characteristic of a little impatient feeling, which only required management; and the apothecaries, who took patients to consult him, were in the habit of cautioning them against telling long stories of their complaints. An old lady, who was naturally inclined to be prosy, once sent for him, and began by saying that her complaints commenced when she was *three years old*, and wished him to listen to the detail of them from that early period. The professor, however, rose abruptly and left the house, telling the old lady to read his book—page so and so, and there she would find directions for old ladies to manage their health.

It must be confessed, Mr. Abernethy, although a gentleman in appearance, manner, and education, sometimes wanted that courtesy and worldly deportment which is considered so essential to the medical practitioner. He possessed none of the "*suaviter in modo*," but much of the eccentricity of a man of genius, which he undoubtedly was. His writings must always be read by the profession to which he belonged, with advantage; although, in his great work upon his *hobby*, his theory is perhaps pushed to a greater extent than is admissible in practice. His rules for dieting and general living should be read universally; for they are assuredly calculated to prolong life and secure health, although few perhaps would be disposed to comply with them rigidly. When some one observed to Mr. Abernethy himself that he appeared to live much like other people, and by no means to be bound by his own rules,—the professor replied, that he wished to act according to his own precepts, but he had "*such a devil of an appetite*," that he could not do so.

Mr. Abernethy had a great aversion to any hint being thrown out that he *cured* a patient of complaint. Whenever an observation to this effect was made, he would say, "I never cured any body." The meaning of this is perfectly obvious. His system was extremely



wise and rational, although, as he expressed himself to ignorant persons, it was not calculated to excite confidence. He despised all the humbug of the profession, and its arts to deceive and mislead patients and their friends, and always told the plain truth without reserve. He knew that the term *cure* is inapplicable, and only fit to be used by quacks, who gain their livelihood by what they call cures, which they promise the patient to effect. Mr. Abernethy felt that nature was only to be *seconded* in her efforts, by an art which is derived from scientific principles and knowledge, and that it is not the physician or surgeon who cures, but *nature*, whom the practitioner assists by art. Weak-minded persons are apt to run after cures, and thus nostrums and quacks are in vogue, as if the living human system was as immutable in its properties as a piece of machinery, and could be remedied when it went wrong as the watchmaker repairs the watch with certainty, or the coachmaker mends the coach. No one appreciated more highly the value of medicine as a science than Mr. Abernethy, but he knew that it depended upon observation and a deep knowledge of the laws and phenomena of vital action, and that it was not a mere affair of guess and hazard in its application, nor of a certain tendency as to its effects.

This disposition of mind led the philosopher to disregard prescribing for his patients frequently, as he had less faith in the prescription than in the general system to be adopted by the patient in his habits and diet. He has been known accordingly, when asked if he did not intend to prescribe, to disappoint the patient by saying, "Oh, if you *wish* it, I'll prescribe for you, certainly." Instead of asking a number of questions as to symptoms, &c. he usually contented himself with a general dissertation, or lecture and advice as to the management of the constitution, to which local treatment was always a secondary consideration with him altogether. When patients related long accounts of their sufferings, and expected the healing remedy perhaps, without contemplating any personal sacrifices of their indulgences, or alteration of favorite habits, he often cut short their narratives by putting his fore-finger on the pit of their stomachs, and observing, "It's all *there*, Sir;" and the never-failing pill and draught, with rigid restrictions as to diet, and injunctions as to exercise, invariably followed, although perhaps rarely attended to; for persons in general would rather submit to even nauseous medicine than abandon sensual gratifications, or diminish their worldly pleasures and pursuits.

Mr. Abernethy's great example, which he delighted to quote and enforce, was the celebrated Venetian nobleman, Cornaro, who, at forty years of age, being emaciated and enfeebled by luxurious living, changed his constitution, from adopting measured abstinence, in such a manner as to live in health and vigor to somewhere above ninety, declaring constantly that old age was the happiest period of life. Hence our philosopher's book upon the disorders of health is really valuable, although his maxims and precepts are too rigid perhaps for flesh-loving sinners, who enjoy mental and bodily strength, and thus yield fearlessly and unconscious of danger to the temptations which surround them.







## ANECDOTES OF MR. ABERNETHY.

THE eccentricities of a man of genius usually constitute the most prominent feature in the personal character; and in general, wherever there is talent of any kind, some peculiarity of manner exists. With respect to Mr. Abernethy there was no real moroseness of disposition; and his impatience of loquacity and superfluous details arose from a great degree of sagacity, clearness of judgment, and a feeling of independence. He neither sought to recommend himself, nor win his patients, by any of those tricks which are daily practised at the expense of sacrificing opinion and feeling to policy. His mind disqualified him from adopting that affected interest which distinguishes many of the well-bred physicians, and he heartily despised their little arts to acquire popularity. He seemed to feel as if he mentally expressed himself thus:—"Here I am, ready to give my advice if you want it; but you must take it as you find it, and if you don't like it, egad, (his favourite word,) you may go about your business, I don't want to have anything to do with you; hold your tongue and be off." In some such mood as this he received a visit from a lady one day who was well-acquainted with his invincible repugnance to her sex's predominant disposition, and who therefore forbore speaking but simply in reply to his laconic queries. The consultation was conducted during three visits in the following manner:—First day—Lady enters and holds out her finger—Abernethy. "Cut?" Lady. "Bite." A. "Dog?" L. "Parrot." A. "Go home and poultice it." Second day—Finger held out again—A. "Better?" L. "Worse." A. "Go home and poultice it again." Third day—Finger held out as before—A. "Better?" L. "Well." A. "You're the most sensible woman I ever met with.—Good bye—Get out."

Another lady having scalded her arm, called at the usual hour to show it three successive days, when similar laconic conversations took place. First day—Patient, exposing the arm, says—"Burnt." A. "I see it," and, having prescribed a lotion, she departs. Second day—Patient shows the arm, and says—"Better." A. "I know it." Third day—Again showing the arm, Patient—"Well." A. "Any fool can tell that.—What d' ye come again for?—Get away."

A patient consulted Mr. Abernethy for a pain of the arm, and, holding it up in the air, said "It always gives me pain when I hold it up so." A. "Then why the devil do you hold it up so?"

In all cases of obesity and repletion Mr. Abernethy was especially impatient, and indisposed to prescribe. A portly gentleman from the country once called on him for advice and received the following answer: "You nasty beast; you go and fill your g——, and then you come to me to empty them."

A young lady was brought one morning by her mamma, complaining of difficulty of breathing when taking exercise and after her meals. Perceiving her to be very tightly laced round the waist, Mr. Abernethy seized a pair of scissors, and, without saying a word, ripped up the stays from top to bottom, and then desired her to



walk about for ten minutes. The injunction being complied with accordingly, he demanded how she felt. "Better," was the reply. The mandate was repeated, and, the walk being finished, he asked—"How now?" "Quite well," was the answer. Abernethy. "That will do.—Take her away,—and don't let her wear tight stays." In such a case a common physician would probably prescribe to oblige the apothecary and to please the patient. The eccentric professor went directly to the cause at once, and removed it, without caring who was pleased or who not so, having no sinister object in view. Another young lady was one summer's morning brought to him by her mother in consequence of the former having swallowed a spider. Mr. Abernethy dextrously caught a blue-bottle fly as it fled by him, and told the patient to put it into her mouth, and if she spit it out in a few moments the spider would come out with it.

A lawyer having called to show the state of his leg, proceeded to remove the bandages, which Mr. Abernethy endeavoured to prevent, every now and then repeating—"No, no—that will do,—shut it up—shut it up." Accordingly the lawyer yielded at length, but determined on revenge. Mr. Abernethy having simply prescribed for the stomach without regard to the leg, the patient tendered a shilling, and prepared to depart, when the former, missing the expected sovereign, observed that there must be some mistake. "No, no," said the lawyer, advancing to the door, "that will do—that will do,—shut it up—shut it up."

Mr. Abernethy was by no means disinclined to adopt his own suggestions himself, in regard to the preservation of his health, although he rarely did so. A medical gentleman, not long since, in consultation with him about a patient, observed that he had not been well some time, and he thought the advice which Mr. Abernethy had just been giving his patient might be of service to himself. "Egad, to be sure it would; and if I had adopted it I should not have been the miserable cripple I am now," was the reply.

Whenever there was any thing seriously or unavoidably the matter, Mr. Abernethy would rivet his attention to it.—It was only when tormented with superfluous questions and details, and a narration of symptoms arising from indolence and indulgence, that his impatience became manifested. His manner to the poor under his care in the hospital was kind, attentive, and humane; and to all who knew him he was confessedly a man of an excellent heart and amiable disposition, however roughly he might appear to behave at times towards some who consulted him.

A celebrated surgeon once told Mr. Abernethy that he calculated on gaining about two thousand a-year in consequence of his (Mr. Abernethy's) oddity of manner to patients, who, being disgusted, left him immediately. Still Mr. Abernethy had a large practice,—was consulted far and near; and his manners, though sometimes repulsive, in some instances tended to attract patients. It is quite certain that his oddity extended his name.

The conversation once turning upon education at Mr. Abernethy's table, he expressed rather a preference for public schools; and being



asked which he thought the best for boys, replied in favour of Eton, because it tended to polish the manners more than any other perhaps; upon which Mrs. Abernethy observed, it was a pity he had not been educated there himself. A public school might, however, in polishing his manners, have altered his prominent characteristics, which, while they certainly indicated great eccentricity, probably formed a very material portion of the basis of that reputation, which so peculiarly distinguished John Abernethy in every relation of life as an original genius.

As a proof of his humane and kind-hearted feelings, which his eccentricities could not conceal, the following may stand as one among many instances:—A widow lady from a remote county brought up her daughter to consult our professor upon a chronic case which occupied many weeks to relieve, and a great consumption of regularly-tendered fees was entailed. It was obvious that the lady's affection for her daughter, and confidence in her medical adviser, were beyond all pecuniary considerations, although it was equally obvious that her means were scarcely equal to the widow's expenditure on the occasion of her town visit. When the period arrived for the parties to return into the country, Mr. Abernethy presented the young lady with a small parcel to take home with her, in which he informed her was a little present to reward her good behaviour under bodily affliction. On opening the parcel it contained ALL THE FEES which the mother had given the professor; by which delicate mode of proceeding he avoided the ostentation of conferring an obligation, and obviated the embarrassment which the widow's feelings would otherwise have been exposed to, in continuing to receive gratuitous advice for her daughter from a professional character upon whom she had no claim.

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In addition to the above, we have received the following Letter, which may be styled "More Last Words" of the worthy Doctor.

TO THE EDITOR.

MR. METROPOLITAN,

He's gone!—my friend, your friend,—nay more, the friend of the human race! If, Sir, I did not positively blubber, like Corporal Trim over the dead body of Sterne's *Le Fevre*, it is not too much for me to assert that the silent tear trickled down my rough-spun, iron cheek, when I heard that the "Great Creature" in the medical world (Mr. Abernethy) "had gone to that bourne from whence no traveller returns."

His departure was rather sudden—the doctor was not exactly prepared to resist the severe attack made upon him by the ugly, ill-natured opponent of mankind; and his specific, so extremely successful in numerous other instances, in his own case proved vain:—the doctor's grand antidote, universally sought after by all ranks of society to prevent the loss of life, wanted its accustomed efficacy when applied to himself.

That the late Mr. Abernethy was a man of splendid talents, and a



great "Feature" in the medical world, there needs no ghost from the grave to prove; but, nevertheless, doubts have been expressed whether his eccentricity of manners, rudeness of behaviour, and the difficulty of approach to his person, (a forlorn hope upon several occasions, without being affronted,) did not do more for him with the public in general than the whole of his studies and acquirements put together. He was not the "sugar and water" physician who would smile in your face—laugh at your credulity—and pick your pocket by "friendly" prescriptions, calculated neither to produce mischief nor good. Neither did the late doctor wish to impose on the minds of his patients by the flourish of a diamond ring—the display of lace ruffles—the dress coat—the pompous gait—the significant nod; in fact, he did not dress for the character at all: and dancing attendance on the great was entirely out of his knowledge of the practice. In reality, the late doctor was what the world called a rude but highly-gifted man. To encounter him at times was any thing but pleasing: the timid female was more than alarmed at his harsh reply; the resolute man stood abashed at the unexpected check he received from his rude remarks; and the bold fellow was frequently brought to a stand-still by the authoritative decisive tone of the doctor, bidding the patient "Begone! that he (Mr. A.) was no physician." But he had his interesting moments when he became eloquent, communicative, and truly pleasing to his friends. "I am too passionate," he would often observe to his company, "and I ought never to have been a medical man." Yet to those applicants who could put up with his oddities of temper he was a doctor of the very first class, and his advice to them was important indeed. Every person on quitting his presence felt strongly that he possessed ability from his little toe to the highest hair upon his head. From a sensible mind too, he liked the WHY? that, in return, he might give the BECAUSE.

There was no trick, no finesse, no humbug about his practice. He called things by their proper names: he always told the truth, while other medical men endeavoured, perhaps on the score of feeling or politeness, to conceal it from the mind of the agitated patient: the conduct of the doctor was straightforward upon all occasions. To die? or not to die? questions often proposed to him, he answered unhesitatingly; and those persons who possessed fortitude enough to meet his reply, were relieved from a "thousand doubts, hopes, and fears, that the flesh is heir too!"

However, in spite of the doctor's well-known confidence, he was to be managed—and he was frequently defeated against his will, when he least expected it: although eccentric to the very echo of eccentricity, yet the eccentric man had the best chance with him in overcoming his peculiarities; the blunt man often got the better of the doctor's rudeness; and the bold hero, something after the manner of "Greek to Greek," more than once or twice proved his master. The following incidents will illustrate his eccentricity. A jolly-hearted fox-hunter in the neighbourhood of Doncaster, one of those choice-spirits who had lived rather "too fast" for his constitution—devoted to his lass and his glass—fond of his dog and



his gun—and “Yoicks! hark forward, tally ho!” to him far sweeter sounds than Braham’s ‘Beautiful maid’—felt himself out of sorts—in other words, he could not tell what was the matter with him; he therefore consulted the Bolus of the place, of whom the whole parish declared no man could better

Gild a pill,  
Make a bill,  
Or bleed or blister!

But the country apothecary, with all his Caleb Quotem sort of talent, proved of no use to the fox-hunter; the complaint of the latter got worse and worse, and he was determined to consult, without any more delay, one of the faculty in London. Abernethy was pointed out to him as most likely to make him hearty again; but, at the same time, it was intimated to him the reception he would probably meet with on making his bow. “Never mind,” said he, “if I do not prove myself a match for the doctor, may my mare refuse the first leap she comes to; may I never again be in at the death.” On stating the nature of his complaint to Abernethy, the latter replied, “Sir, the sooner you go back the better; you have come on a fool’s errand! I am no doctor.” The fox-hunter, in great surprise, observed, “Perhaps I have mistaken the house; and if I have intruded myself into your company I am sorry for it. May I ask, Sir, is your name Abernethy?” “Yes,” replied the doctor, “Abernethy is my name.” “Abernethy and no doctor!” said the fox-hunter, “but I have been told you are a joker—though a joke to a man who has come 200 miles is rather too much out of place for him to relish it!” “Joke or no joke,” answered Abernethy, “you will find I am no doctor; and the sooner you quit my house the better,” (getting up to ring the bell for the servant.) “Hear me, doctor Abernethy,” replied the fox-hunter, (pulling out his purse at the same time,) “I have not much knowledge it is true, but I trust I have too much sense to put my purse in competition with my constitution; therefore, name your fee, and, be it great or small, I will give it to you! That you are a doctor, and a man of great skill, Fame reports all over the kingdom: your talents have induced me to travel 200 miles expressly for your advice—therefore none of your tricks upon travellers! I will not be disappointed! Advice I come for—and *advice* I *will* have!” (running immediately up to the door, locking it, and putting the key into his pocket.) He then held out his wrist to the doctor. “You *will* have advice,” echoed the doctor in a rage, “Insolent man! not from me. I again tell you that I am no physician.” The fox-hunter, putting himself in a boxing attitude, advanced towards Mr. Abernethy, and in an offensive manner exclaimed, “Then by G—, I will make a doctor of you; and if you do not feel my pulse without any more equivocation, I will feel yours, and also administer to you some points of my practice. I will likewise give you an emetic, without the smallest particle of physic in it, that shall make you sick for a month.” The doctor retreating said with astonishment, “What are you about? are you going to strike me?” “Yes,” replied the fox-hunter, “I am as cool as a cucumber; and



nothing shall stop me in my pursuit: dangers I fear not; and to leap over a steeple is a trifling concern to me when the game is in view; therefore, I again repeat, feel my pulse, or else ——” The doctor immediately laid hold of his arm, and in a sort of whisper, as the players gave it, aside exclaimed—“and a d——d strong pulse it is!” then in a louder tone, “suppose I had not felt your pulse—what then?” “Why,” replied the fox-hunter, with a most determined look attached to the expression, “I would have run you down sooner than I would a fox; and have made you more timid than a hare, before you could have sung out for the assistance of either of the colleges?” “The devil you would,” said the doctor, “nevertheless I admire your candour; and I am not at all disposed to quarrel with your bluntness, and as you have been so extremely explicit with me, I will render myself as perfectly intelligible to you, and also with as much sincerity. Your pulse tells me, that you are a far greater beast than the horse you ride, indeed the animal is the most preferable character of the two by comparison—your horse feels the spur and attends to it; the whip to him is not applied in vain; and he eats, drinks, and takes his rest more like a rational being than his master. While on the contrary, the man with a mind, or at least who ought to possess something like the exercise of intellect, is all excess—he drinks to excess—he eats to excess—he hunts to excess—he smokes to excess.” “Bravo, doctor, nay more, my friend,” replied the fox-hunter, quite pleased, “only say that my pulse has been abused, but not worn out—that I shall once more be upon the right scent, and that the effects of training will enable me again to enjoy the “view halloo!” accompanied by rosy health, and I will be yours, &c. for ever—I will do anything, I will apologize to you——” “Retract one word that you have uttered,” suppressing a smile, answered the doctor, “and I will be dumb! and you will lose that advice you almost fought to obtain: first, buy my book, then let Nature be your principal guide in future, and when you are at fault, Mr. Fox-hunter, consult page —— and you will be able to decide upon your own case.” “Buy your book?” said the fox-hunter, “aye, that I will; and I should think it cheap, if it cost as much as Rees’s Cyclopædia. I will purchase it in a canter, and it shall be as bible-proof to me for the remainder of my life.” “Do then, and make your exit without delay—I have lost too much time already,” answered the doctor. “I am off like a shot,” replied the fox-hunter, “but the first toast I shall propose at the club on my return home, will be, ‘Long life to Dr. Abernethy.’” “Fox-hunter, farewell!” said the doctor, “Remember, that your horse is your example—drink only when you are dry—satisfy your hunger, when it requires it—and when Nature points it out to you, take rest!” The fox-hunter behaved liberally as to the fee—they shook hands together like men who had a respect for each other—the doctor being perfectly satisfied that his patient belonged to that class of persons who are vulgarly denominated “rum customers;” and the fox-hunter did not quit the house of Mr. Abernethy, without being equally impressed that the doctor was one of those extraordinary men not to be met with amongst 20,000 human beings!



Elliston, of theatrical celebrity, about a year and a half ago, being confined to his bed with a violent attack of the rheumatism, and anxious to obtain the best advice upon the subject, sent for Abernethy to attend him. On the arrival of the doctor, he found Elliston attended by his nurse and another woman; but having waited a short time for their departure, they did not appear to take the hint, or perhaps did not think their absence absolutely necessary; the doctor began to talk respecting the complaint to Elliston without the least regard to delicacy, when the women quitted immediately. The coast being clear, Elliston threw off the bed-clothes, and, exhibiting his knee to Abernethy, observed, "I believe you call that the rheumatism, doctor—what is good for it?" "I don't know," replied Mr. Abernethy, "neither do I think the wise ones, whom they term the faculty, are any better judges of it! I have been laid up with the rheumatism for the last three weeks, and could not wait upon my patients, and I assure you I was totally at a loss for a remedy!" "I have followed the old women's advice," answered Mr. Elliston, and I have applied hot water and flannels to the parts affected!" "And why not?" said the doctor, "I have often found old women's prescriptions better than old men's; and I must confess, that I am for repeated warm applications; and I also think that the practical experience of old women-nurses in such complaints is much better than the advice given by the great men of the faculty. Therefore follow the plan you have adopted, keep your body open, and you will soon recover, as I have done." "I feel obliged by this call," replied Elliston, handing over two sovereigns to the doctor as his fee. "No, no, no! I cannot think of such a thing," answered the doctor. "But I must insist, Sir,—business is business," said Elliston; "the scene, I acknowledge, is most grateful to my feelings, but the actor has overdone his part—it is out of character—and I cannot permit you, doctor, to make your exit on such terms—I should forget the cue if I did." "Business must be attended to, I am well aware," answered the doctor with a smile; "and therefore my opinion is, that ten minutes' conversation with Elliston is worth two sovereigns, and I shall always *act* upon the same terms with you. Good bye, friend Elliston, (shaking him by the hand,) get well as fast as you can—and return to the stage." The doctor made his bow, and was gone before Elliston had time to reply.

A little sporting butcher, well-known in Fleet-market, but possessing a delicate constitution, and frequently unable to attend to business through illness, was advised by his friends to take the opinion of Abernethy as to the nature of his complaint. On obtaining admission to the doctor's house, he met with Mr. Abernethy in the hall, who rudely accosted the butcher with "What do you want?" "Your advice, Doctor," said the butcher in a very submissive style. "Pray, Sir, who told you that I was a doctor?" asked Mr. Abernethy. "All our market, Sir," replied the butcher—"the people—everybody—all the world!" "Then, Sir, your market knows nothing about it," answered the doctor, quite in rage, "the people, or everybody as you say, are fools; and the world's a liar!" the doctor hastily making for his parlour-door.



“Stop, Sir, if you please,” said the butcher, “you have forgot—”  
 “What have I forgot?” replied the doctor impetuously—“Your fee, Sir!” said the butcher, bowing, and holding out the guinea to him. The doctor surprised, and, rather off his guard, observed, “Your head appears to be screwed on the right way—follow me.” The little butcher having entered the parlour, the doctor said, “Who are you?” “I am,” replied the little man, “one of the cutting-up tribe—a sticker—a kill-bull, according to the common slang of the day; but, after the old style of expression, I am nothing more nor less than a humble butcher at your service.” “Indeed!” said the doctor, with a sort of grin on his countenance, “you are cutting me up, I believe—What is your complaint?” “I can’t get rid of my grub, Sir,” answered the butcher. “What!” replied the doctor, laughing outright—“not get rid of your grub, when the streets are so crowded with beggars!—you are a strange sort of fellow.” “No, that is not what I mean—every thing I eat gets no further than here; it stops by the way;” said the butcher, (putting his finger up to his chest,) “the victualling-office, as we call it, is out of repair.” “Oh, I understand you,” answered the doctor,—“indigestion is your complaint.” “Yes,” replied the butcher, “that is the word you physical gentlemen name it.” “Read my book,” observed the doctor. “Perhaps that is more than I am able to do, as I am but a very indifferent scholar, and have been more engaged with beasts than with men,” answered the butcher. “The first school-boy you meet with, tell him to read to you page —, and listen to it with attention; follow it as closely as an informer sticks to an Act of Parliament, and your victualling-office will soon have a free passage through it, and your grub will no longer be a burden to you,” said the doctor, ringing his bell for the servant to show the butcher out. “I’ll book it at all events—it is as good as gold to me,” replied the butcher; “and now, Mr. Doctor, or whatever you may be, I wish to behave handsome in return—I will send you the primest rump of beef in all our market, that you may cut and come again; and when you are tired of cutting it, send for another—” “John!” the doctor calling out “open the street-door; this butch—gentleman wants to be gone.” “What a nice man I don’t think!” observed the butcher in a sort of whisper, and winking his eye towards the servant, “there are stranger fellows to be met with than the doctor, if you know where to find them.” Then raising his voice, “If you should want a steak at any time, Sir, don’t mention it, I shall always be grateful—I am not particular to a shade—” “The door I say, John!” urged the doctor; and the servant almost elbowed the little butcher into the street.

I am, Mr. Metropolitan,  
 Yours, &c.

PHILO-ABERNETHY.



## CONVENT SKETCHES.—No. I.

## A PASSAGE IN THE LIFE OF FATHER MENDIZABAL.

I KNOW of nothing that so much excites the curiosity of the traveller in Catholic countries, as monasteries and monks, convents and nuns. The novelist and the romance-writer have largely drawn from this source of interest; and imagination is accordingly early impressed with the fictions that have lent enchantment to their pages. Even at home,—in our country, from which all trace of the monastic life has long since disappeared, fancy, when left to wander at will among the ruins of our ancient abbeys, gleans an abundant harvest of romance; and how much more vivid then must her creations be, where time has left no gap of centuries to be filled up, and where convent-walls still inclose the living dead!

But, in truth, there needs not the aid of imagination, nor the fictions of the novelist, to awaken the interest and excite the curiosity of the traveller: convent-walls have still their secrets; many curious histories are buried within them; and by him who is fortunate enough to lift up the veil, the tales that have filled the page of romance will be often found to be outdone by realities,—I mean, those realities that have preceded the vow of monastic life. Men and women do not cut themselves off from the world and its enjoyments without a fitting reason; they do not devote themselves to the austerities of a cloister without a strong impelling motive. Some, I know there are, who misled in childhood by the artifices of priests and confessors, have renounced the world before they have known how to estimate it; and others, I believe there may be, who have made a deliberate choice of the monastic life; but by far the greater number of those who are the inmates of convents and monasteries have been driven from the world by strange events. In this opinion my own experience has confirmed me: I have visited those countries where the monastic life is the most honoured, and where it boasts the greatest number of votaries; I have gleaned where I could from convent records, and I purpose in these sketches to relate a few of the histories which have been confided to me. Let it not be supposed that all of these will prove tales of unmixed woe; the history of wrecked prosperity, and blighted hope, and hard usage from the world, would become tedious. The strange events that I have said drive men from the world, are not always melancholy; and the first of these sketches will be a proof of this.

“El Convento de San Geronimo,” said the man, in answer to my question what building that was on the opposite side of the Guadalquivir. I had often since coming to Seville, admired the situation of this building, standing upon a small elevation a little retired from the bank of the river, and surrounded by its groves and gardens. “It is well worth a visit,” added my companion; “there are many fine and valuable relics in it; and the friars are polite to strangers.” I had not yet visited any of the convents of Seville excepting *los Capuchinos*, where I had spent a part of almost every day amidst those immortal productions with which the divine Murillo has en-