

**A memoir of the life of Edward Rigby ... read before the Norwich  
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*W. B. B. B.*

**A MEMOIR**

OF THE LIFE OF

**EDWARD RIGBY, M. D. &c.**

BEING

**AN EULOGY**

READ BEFORE

**THE NORWICH PHILOSOPHICAL**

**SOCIETY,**


ON THE THIRTEENTH OF DECEMBER,

1821.

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**BY JOHN CROSS.**

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BURKS AND KINNEBROOK, PRINTERS, NORWICH.



A MEMOIR

OF THE LIFE OF

EDWARD NICHOLSON, M.D.

68560

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

READ BEFORE

THE NORWICH PHARMACEUTICAL



1881

BY JOHN GOSWOLD

PRINTED AND BOUND BY J. GOSWOLD, NORWICH.

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**AN EULOGY**  
UPON  
**EDWARD RIGBY, M. D. &c.**  
READ BEFORE THE  
**NORWICH PHILOSOPHICAL**  
**SOCIETY,**

*ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13th, 1821.*

—♦♦♦—

IN rising, Gentlemen, to perform the task you have assigned me, by paying a tribute of respect to the memory of our departed President, I shall forego all apologies, and rest entirely upon your kindness, whilst I follow the dictates of my own judgment and feelings.

A similarity of professional pursuits, and habits of the strictest intimacy with him whom we have to lament over, must have been the only motives which guided you in selecting me to address you on this melancholy occasion; but in yielding to those motives you have, I fear, forgotten how many more important qualifications are required to describe adequately the character and acquirements of such a man, to estimate the loss this



Society has sustained, and to satisfy an audience like the present. The plan which it best suits me to pursue is direct and simple; and if the plain narrative which I purpose to offer be occasionally interrupted by an attempt at panegyric, I beg of you to be assured, that I shall say nothing which I do not feel, in whatever degree I may fail to make others feel what I say. The best eulogy upon a *great* man will invariably be found in the recital of his useful labours.

Edward Rigby was descended from a respectable family in Lancashire, and was born at Chowbent on the 9th of December, 1747. His grandfather by the maternal side was Dr. John Taylor, of Norwich, whose "Hebrew Concordance" and various writings on theological subjects, are well known to the learned world. At an early age he was placed under the tuition of Dr. Priestley, and by his quickness and assiduity so far gained the confidence of his præceptor, that he was allowed to superintend the printing of a work of the Doctor's which was then in the press. I have often heard him remark that, to assist his memory in recollecting his lesson in Geography, he used to cut out the different counties of England from the map, and replace them in their proper situations—anticipating the useful discovery of the dissected map, which has since been adopted as a successful method of instruction. On Dr. Priest-



ley's removing to Warrington, Edward Rigby still continued under his care, although too young to be admitted into the Academy. Quick and ardent in profiting by the example before him, he imbibed from this source a zealous love of philosophical research, and a noble philanthropy which embraced all human nature; and the days of his *school-hood*, which are always recurred to with delight, were by him held in the fondest recollection, because they were associated with the memory of a man celebrated equally in literature and science. Leaving this able teacher before he was fourteen years old, Edward Rigby was placed for a short time under private tuition, that he might attend more particularly to some parts of his education which had hitherto been neglected. Having completed these studies, he arrived in Norwich on the 17th of September, 1762, and was immediately apprenticed to Mr. David Martineau, a surgeon at that time eminent in his profession. The few surviving companions of this period of his life describe him as being gay, and fond of whatever would promote pleasantry and conviviality; but he never lost sight of improvement in choosing his associates, and was constantly so full of ideas that he often signalized himself by a *jeu-d'esprit* amongst his friends, with whom he formed a literary society, where every member was required at each meeting to produce some novelty in writing,



whether the laugh went with or against him. He was sanguine and energetic in his pursuits, and would frequently deprive himself of a due share of sleep to accomplish a favorite object or master the subject he had undertaken. The industry which characterized the rest of his life was conspicuous even at this youthful period, and he would at any time rather be robbed of his money than of his time.

The term of his apprenticeship being completed, Mr. Rigby pursued his professional studies in London with all the advantages which the medical schools, at that time flourishing, or rather beginning to flourish, under the two *Hunters*, afforded; and he was admitted a Member of the Corporation of Surgeons on the 4th of May, 1769. In the same year he married, and fixed himself as a practitioner in Norwich. Possessed of a commanding person, fine intellect, and affable manners, he soon got employment in his profession, and the experience which he gained, by being appointed to attend all the difficult cases of midwifery amongst the poor women in this populous city, was made the basis of his future celebrity. In 1776 he published "An Essay on the Uterine Hæmorrhage which precedes the Delivery of the full-grown Fœtus," in which he distinguished cases of flooding into *accidental* and *unavoidable*, and advocated an active method of treatment in



the latter class, which has been the means of saving the lives of thousands of his fellow creatures. By a singular coincidence, a similar arrangement and practice were promulgated about the same period by M. Levret, in France; but whoever may share with Mr. Rigby the claim to originality, he alone has the merit of having introduced into general use in this country the practice so necessary to be pursued in these perilous and distressing cases, by the immense body of experience with which he supported his reasonings on the subject. This publication in a few years obtained for him an European reputation, and wherever medical science is cultivated, it is still read and estimated for the pure classical style in which it is written, the practical value of the observations it contains, and the numerous cases that illustrate them. Indeed, what more needs to be said upon this work than that it has been translated into the French and German languages, and that the fifth edition is exhausted by the immense demand for it in this country? As this was the first, so it was the last work, upon which the pen of the author was employed, the preface to the sixth edition, now in the press, receiving a finishing touch by him on his death-bed.

Although Mr. Rigby was much engaged in the laborious duties of his profession, he never neglected scientific pursuits; and having, by practice



and a ready supply of ideas, acquired a remarkable facility in composing, he contributed largely to the journals of the day, in reviewing new publications, and in furnishing original communications upon a great variety of topics. Early rising, uninterrupted health, and a vigour of mind that demanded no other relaxation than a change of employment, gave him the means of joining a cultivation of the science of his profession with the most extensive practice of it. In 1783 Mr. Rigby published "An Essay on the Red Peruvian Bark in the Cure of Intermittents," representing it as capable of acting almost as a specific in fevers of that description. This remedy has of late, however, fallen into disuse, by the complaints for which it was so strongly recommended having entirely disappeared from this district; intermittents now being no longer met with in this city, or its immediate neighbourhood, although so frequent at the time the treatise in question was written. Ever watchful over the lower class of people, who are least capable of watching over themselves, Mr. Rigby in the same year wrote a small pamphlet on the charitable inoculation of the poor, warmly and humanely exerting his powerful abilities to check the ravages of the small-pox. Amongst the various productions of his pen, none more strongly displays his scientific acquirements, ingenuity, and practical skill, than his Essay "on the Theory of



“Animal Heat, and on its Application in the  
 “Treatment of cutaneous Eruptions, Inflamma-  
 “tions, and some other Diseases.” Notwith-  
 standing the revolutions in chemistry and the  
 modern experiments and discoveries in physiology  
 have rendered many parts of that treatise obsolete,  
 the facts by which the practice advised is supported  
 remain in full force. To recommend the cooling  
 treatment of inflammatory diseases was at that  
 time bold and original ; and the author had the  
 triumph of living to witness the complete esta-  
 blishment of the treatment he recommended ;  
 whilst his speculations yielded to the theories of  
 the writers who followed him, in the same manner  
 as these will, in all probability, give place to the  
 doctrines of *our* successors. His “Chemical Ob-  
 “servations on Sugar,” which displayed equal  
 ingenuity, shared the same fate, in consequence of  
 the unforeseen changes in chemical doctrines.  
 But Mr. Rigby was contented to suffer whatever  
 the advancement of science might detract from  
 the lasting merit of his writings. One of the most  
 striking traits in his character was the little power  
 which prejudice and education possessed to prevent  
 his relinquishing long-established opinions for new  
 improvements, and to the last year of his valuable  
 life he would embrace a discovery, or adopt a new  
 opinion, with the same enthusiasm as in his youth,  
 the same vigour as in his earlier manhood. To



observe and to assist in the improvement of science was his delight, and to this object was his active and energetic mind continually directed, making it second to none but that of alleviating the unavoidable afflictions of human nature. The Essay upon Animal Heat was translated into German a few years after its appearance in England, as were also the Chemical Observations on Sugar.

It was Mr. Rigby's nature to sympathise with the difficulties of his professional brethren, though the same difficulties could not reach him. By constant intercourse with those who held a less eminent situation than himself, he became acquainted too frequently with cases of distress, and wishing to offer the means of providing against a day of need, to those whose scanty remuneration could not, by the greatest œconomy, be converted into a provision for their families, he was foremost in planning and establishing, in 1786, the "Norfolk Benevolent Society for the Relief of the Widows and Orphans of Medical Men." This was the second provincial institution of the kind established in this country, and the arranging of the rules, conducting the necessary correspondence, and keeping the accounts of the charity, were duties which this actively benevolent man willingly undertook, by accepting the office of Secretary at the first meeting of the Members of the Society. In 1810 he relinquished the office



of Secretary, and was appointed Treasurer, which appointment he retained until his death. It is surprising that, amongst his numerous avocations, Mr. Rigby attended the annual meetings of the Benevolent Society for *twenty-nine* years in succession, and was only twice absent in thirty-six years. His assiduous and long-continued efforts in behalf of the claimants upon the funds of this inadequately supported institution, fully entitle him to the gratitude of all connected with it, and will make his name be revered so long as charity and benevolence attract the approbation and applause of mankind.

In 1789 Mr. Rigby was made a Member of the Medical Society in London, his writings having brought him into an advantageous acquaintance with many eminent men in the metropolis.

Possessed of a competent fortune, Mr. Rigby at this period was desirous of relaxing a little from the arduous duties of his profession, and therefore determined to make an excursion to the Continent; and as few men were more worthy of such an opportunity of enjoyment, so none were more able to profit by it. Although I have hitherto referred to him chiefly in regard to his celebrity in his profession, he had always cultivated polite literature and science in general. In the circle of useful knowledge there were few subjects with which he was not in some degree



acquainted, and in *Nature* there was no object uninteresting to him. Quitting England in July 1789, he arrived on the 8th of the same month at Paris, where he had an opportunity of witnessing, during his short visit, the earliest commotions in the people, which marked the commencement of the Revolution in France. He had letters to Lavoisier and to Tenon, but neither of them were to be seen. At Versailles he had an interview with Mirabeau and Turgot, to whom his companions bore letters; and he has recorded the words which fell from the lips of the latter at so memorable and critical a period. At the theatre, the Palais Royale, in the streets and public squares, he was an eye-witness to the popular meetings, processions, and conflicts, which fill the pages of history relating to that memorable period. We may judge how he spent his time by the descriptions he has given. Of the night of the 13th of July he says: "It was passed most uncomfortably. We went to bed, but soon rose again. The streets were full of mob and soldiers—general symptoms of alarm, shouts, firing of guns, light of torches, and some appearances of distant fires." Next day he intended to leave Paris, but passports were refused, and no persons allowed to pass its gates. This delay gave him an opportunity of witnessing sights of horror which history has failed to record. Before the close of that day, shouts of



exultation rent the air at the storming of the Bastile, and as he was walking along the streets he met a large body of the people with two bloody heads raised on pikes—one of them the head of the Governor of the Bastile. Dangers did not deter him from observing, at all hours, what was transacting. On the night of the 15th, he says: “ We walked out several times in the night;— “ every now and then a party passed, who came “ from the Bastile. They had released some pri- “ soners; amongst them an aged Count, who was “ found in one of the deepest and most inaccessible “ dungeons : he had been confined forty-two “ years, and was a Major of Cavalry; he was “ dressed in a greasy reddish tunic—his beard had “ not been shaved, and his hair, which had not “ been combed during the whole period, was grown “ very long, closely matted together, and divided “ into two parts, reaching on each side to his “ knees—so that he exhibited a most extraordinary “ appearance.” Such are the scenes he describes from his own observations. After repeated and fruitless attempts to get away, being stopped by the populace and brought back to the hotel, he finally quitted Paris on the 19th of July, and proceeded to the South of France, where a clear sky, mild atmosphere, and abundant productions, with numerous inhabitants enjoying themselves in the open air in dancing or conversing in groups, gave



him an attachment to a warm climate, which he never relinquished ; and he could not help wishing to dwell amongst them, till he recollected the inseparable ties of relations and friends whom he had left in England. He next passed into Italy, and thence into Switzerland, taking his route home-wards through a part of Germany, Prussia and Holland. In this excursion he was alive to every object within the sphere of his observations. The manners of the different people—the public institutions—the productions of art—the works of nature, from the grandest to the simplest—antiquities—agriculture—government—all these, and more than these, were within the reach of his capacity. Objects were impressed upon him with double force, from his never expecting to see them again ; and his simple yet animated descriptions of whatever was most interesting in the countries through which he passed, will remain, in the circle of his friends, who have access to his unpublished journal, a delightful proof of his great genius, taste and attainments.

Much information respecting his opinions and the bent of his mind is to be gathered from this journal of his continental excursion, every part of which bespeaks him to have been modest in his pretensions, humane in his disposition, and enthusiastic in his fondness for every kind of valuable knowledge. Receiving an unsealed letter of re-



commendation to a distinguished person at Lisle, he had not impudence enough (as he expressed himself on that occasion) to deliver it, because it contained such extravagant praises of himself. He gave way to the best feelings of his nature, when he said: "Every scene which gives me an idea that people are happy, cannot but give me pleasure." He verified to the utmost his own judicious remark, that "travelling is capable of affording more than amusement; it is the greatest source of information and improvement—the only thing which can remove prejudices;" and he returned to his native country fully convinced that human nature is nearly the same every where, and that health, industry and honesty, will generally ensure a fair share of happiness in every quarter of the world.

The fame which Mr. Rigby so justly acquired, more particularly as an accoucheur, obtained for him an offer from the late Dr. Osborne, to join him in giving lectures on Midwifery in the metropolis; but some domestic circumstances stood in the way of this arrangement, and he returned to Norwich to enliven the society of the friends of his earlier years, and to shower blessings upon the inhabitants who estimated him rightly.

I have hitherto spoken of Mr. Rigby principally as a medical writer; but a mind like his could not confine itself to the care of the sick, who make a



small proportion of a population. He was anxious to take care of the whole, to prevent penury as well as disease. Not contented to save life, he wished to make the living happy in themselves, and serviceable to others. He therefore turned his attention to political economy, more especially to the management and comfort of the poor. In 1781, being in Lancashire, his kindness of heart led him to visit the cottage where dwelled the poor woman who had been the nurse of his infancy. She was employed in weaving, and used what is called the flying shuttle. The utility of this simple machine, in facilitating labour, and allowing the weaver to sit erect, instead of leaning with his breast against his loom, struck Mr. Rigby instantaneously. He made an accurate sketch of it with all its dimensions, and on his return introduced it to the notice of some manufacturers in Norwich, where it was subsequently adopted, and has contributed in some degree towards the present prosperity of our city.

In 1783 Mr. Rigby became a member of the Corporation of Guardians, who take the management of the poor in Norwich, and immediately commenced enquiries respecting the qualities and expense of the provisions, which he had reason to believe might be improved by an alteration in the mode of purchasing and delivering them to the poor. Much opposition was excited by these mea-



sures, as well amongst the officers of the Corporation of Guardians, as amongst the paupers themselves, who became troublesome and even riotous, from an unhappy persuasion that no alteration, having economy for its object, could be made without its producing a diminution of their allowances. The abuse and obloquy which were unjustly cast upon Mr. Rigby, but which had not power to deter him from carrying on the inquiry and executing the plan he had undertaken, were in some measure compensated for, by a large and respectable body of his fellow citizens liberally presenting him with a valuable piece of plate, "in order to shew their sense of his conduct, their gratitude for his important services, and their wish to encourage every good citizen to prosecute objects of real reformation." The following year he ceased to be one of the Corporation of Guardians, which excluded him from taking further measures of improvement than those already suggested; but he was afterwards presented with the freedom of the city, "for his very important services in suggesting regulations, by the adoption of which the expences of maintaining the poor became greatly diminished." Of all these transactions regarding the provision and management of the poor, Mr. Rigby published in 1788 a detailed report, which moreover exhibited some important facts respecting the economy of work-houses in general.



No man was less aspiring to civic honours than Mr. Rigby, as they were equally unsuited to his professional and scientific pursuits; but his private inclination gave way when he saw that an object important to the interests of the city was to be effected. It was in contemplation to build a new workhouse for the poor at an enormous expence, and with a view to be again admitted into the Corporation of Guardians, in order to oppose this measure, he became a candidate for the vacant gown of Alderman in 1802, and was honourably elected. "The duties of magistracy "being little compatible with extensive medical "practice," he observed, "and at the same time "not much suited to my private habits and pur- "suits, I should not have accepted it, could I in "any other way have been a Guardian." Regarding workhouses as the poor man's prison, and the nurseries of indolence, vice and disease, Mr. Rigby advocated so ably the propriety of adopting out-door allowances, that the plan of erecting a new workhouse was relinquished, and an enormous permanent expence spared to the inhabitants of this city. He would not have lived in vain, had he effected only this one great object, the result having so fully proved the strength and justice of every argument he advanced, and of course equally explained the magnitude of the evil he, by perseverance in the midst of difficulty and opposition, prevented. The old workhouse, with slight addi-



tions, accommodated all the applicants for admission, and in the present improved state of our manufactures half the space is unoccupied.

Having undertaken the duties of a Magistrate, Mr. Rigby was watchful to execute every part of them with assiduity, firmness and impartiality. He was rarely absent from any public meeting at which it was possible his services might be needed; and he on all great occasions exerted himself manfully for the public good, disregarding his own private advantage. In 1803 he served the office of Sheriff, and in the execution of the laws coupled justice with the greatest humanity. The year of his Mayoralty, 1805, was signalized by several useful improvements commenced under his direction. The civic feast, which is peculiar to this city, was hospitably celebrated at his expence; weekly bills of mortality (a branch of police which had been till then entirely neglected in Norwich) were instituted, and have since been regularly kept up, affording useful documents respecting the health, disease and increase of population. During the Mayoralty of Mr. Rigby, the philanthropic Mr. Nield visited Norwich, and was accompanied by him to inspect the workhouse, where they were struck with the disgraceful discipline which prevailed in regard to cleanliness, ventilation and the treatment of the poor. Mr. Nield published in the Gentleman's Magazine for



October 1805 an account of what he had seen. This statement gave rise to much controversy, in which Mr. Rigby took a leading part; and whilst many of the charges were denied, the consequence was, that the abuses complained of were removed, and cleanliness, free ventilation and judicious treatment, have ever since maintained health and good order in that abode of poverty and infirmity. The small-pox was prevalent in the same year, and the city felt the benefit of having so enlightened and active a Chief Magistrate, who checked its progress by calling a public meeting, and pointing out the best means of securing a general vaccination. Mr. Rigby feeling on every occasion as warmly interested for the public health and comfort, as the most selfish individuals are for their own safety, continually exerted himself to guard against the ravages of the small-pox; and what he could not accomplish by his persuasive oratory, he endeavoured to gain by a persevering repetition of all the arguments he could devise. Forcibly and often did he urge the necessity of appropriating apartments to the reception of persons casually falling down with the small-pox; but in this instance (I hope a solitary one) he appealed in vain to the judgment and humanity of his fellow Magistrates and Guardians of the Poor. What depended however upon himself for its execution was never withheld. He was the first to introduce



vaccination into Norwich; and he promoted its adoption by every means in his power. At his suggestion the poor were offered a reward for having their children vaccinated, which has contributed less to extend the practice than to ensure its being conducted with regularity. He was made an honorary member of the National Vaccine Establishment, and I believe was never more grateful to Providence for any benefit than for *Vaccination*, which enabled him, by practising it gratuitously amongst the poor of this city to a greater extent than any other individual, to save hundreds of his fellow creatures from disease, deformity and death. A full account of his labours respecting the workhouse and in behalf of vaccination, will be found in his "Further Facts regarding the Management of the Poor," and his "Report of Vaccination in Norwich in 1812 and 1813."

In 1806 Mr. Rigby was admitted a Fellow of the Linnean Society, his acquirements in Botany and Natural History entitling him to such a distinction; he was subsequently made a Fellow of the Horticultural Society of London. It was his ambition to encourage every measure that could in any way promote science, and he was therefore nominated a Patron to the Norwich Society of Artists. There were indeed few of our institutions, charitable or scientific, with which he was



not connected, few public works with which he had not something to do; and it is surprising how many duties connected with his public situations he was able to perform, by punctuality, early rising and incessant application. From the local politics of this city, in which men occasionally from good motives do the worst acts, he constantly kept aloof, and never lent himself to any party. Perhaps there is no party which he has not at some time offended by opposing, nor by which he has not been accused of inconsistency, because he was always consistent with himself in following the dictates of his own judgment and conscience; still on all great political occasions Mr. Rigby took a decided part, and throughout life maintained the noble and liberal principles which he had imbibed in his earlier days.

But I delight less to pursue him through the rugged paths of political discussion, than to view him in the bright sun-shine of science, as already has been done, or seek him in the modest shade of agricultural retirement, where I have yet to follow him.

Dr. Rigby had from an early period of his residence as a practitioner in Norwich, been possessed of an estate a few miles distant, which he visited almost daily, and improved by building, planting and cultivation. These hours of relaxation led him more and more into agricultural



pursuits, and as it was impossible for him long to exert his mind upon any thing unproductively, he towards the latter period of his life employed his pen more upon this than any other topic. In 1815 he published "Suggestions for an improved Cultivation of the Mangel Wurzel." The following year Dr. Rigby made his first visit to Holkham Sheep Shearing, where the splendid hospitality of Mr. Coke, and the admirable system of agriculture by which his extensive estate had been converted from a comparatively barren soil to the most rich and exuberant domain in this part of the kingdom, filled him with enthusiasm on the subject. The impressions derived from this visit, the scenes he witnessed, and the observations suggested by them to his mind, were soon committed to paper, and furnished a memoir for this Society, which many now present, who heard it delivered in the most animated style, by the venerable author, cannot have forgotten. This formed the essay published in 1817 under the title of "Holkham, its Agriculture, &c." and the ease and classical style of the writing, as well as the materials, proved that the author still possessed all the warmth, vigour and strength of mind of his earlier years. Notwithstanding this essay was reprinted entire in the Pamphleteer, it has already extended to the third edition, and has obtained most honourable notice in France, Italy, Germany and America. In this



last country the Philadelphia Society for promoting Agriculture elected him an honorary member, in testimony of their high estimation of this work, and their confidence in the author's capacity and inclination to promote the objects of their institution. Arrived at his seventy-second year, he still had the courage to undertake the most laborious task as a writer, by translating from the French of M. Chateauvieux, his Letters on the Agriculture of Italy, which were published in 1819, forming a thick octavo volume. This task was executed with fidelity, and remains a proof of the unexampled zeal and industry of the translator, who expressed the arduousness of the undertaking, by observing, after completing it, that "it is less difficult to write an original work than to give to a translation the character of originality."

We frequently find the most active minds seeking solace and ease during their declining years in the beauties of the country, the quiet of retirement, and the care-dispelling scenes of agricultural occupation. Dr. Rigby enjoyed these in a singular degree, and looked forward to his afternoon's visit to his favorite country-house, as a secure retreat from bustle and anxiety. To him the world appeared concentrated in Framingham; and the harmony, wisdom and beneficence of Nature, were the constant themes of his discourse, as he walked through his grounds, pointing out the fruits im-



proved by his cultivation, the flowers brought from abroad, the trees planted and grown to giant size under his long and frequent inspection. It was there he renovated himself for the more harassing duties of his public life ; it was there he delighted to entertain with mutual benefit the scientific traveller, or to feast the visitor with the freshest and choicest fruits of the earth ;—for Framingham was equally consecrated to science and to hospitality.

The last work from our lamented associate was one written to perpetuate the beauties of his favourite spot, and was published a year since, under the title of “ Framingham and its Agriculture, with the Economy of a small Farm ;” a little work which shews the spirit, taste and energy of the author, to have remained with him till the remotest period of life. He was suited to rural enjoyments, by adding to a great love of natural history a singular fondness for fine weather. A beautiful and temperate day afforded him sufficient reason to be cheerful and happy, and he seemed himself to partake of the renovation which all vegetation exhibits in the returning warmth of spring. “ The summer,” he would say, “ is the true season for the glory of vegetation : long days, and an ardent sun, diffuse light and heat, and with the assistance of occasional showers, the great work of vegetation is perfected ; the leaf expands, the flower opens, the tree grows,



“grains and fruits ripen, the harvest is accomplished, man rejoices and is thankful.”

Dr. Rigby was attached to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital from its first institution in 1771, (when he was chosen one of the assistant Surgeons) to the period of his death, making altogether half a century. He was appointed one of the principal Surgeons in 1790, and for twenty-four years continued to support, as an operating Surgeon, the high character for which the able men connected with that institution have been distinguished throughout the kingdom. Desirous of withdrawing from a part of his professional engagements, he took his degree in 1814, and was then elected one of the Physicians to the Hospital; in the same year he was made one of the Physicians to the Norfolk Lunatic Asylum; and the duties of both these appointments he continued to perform regularly until his death. With the late Dr. Beevor he established also a *private* Asylum for insane persons, which soon became a source of considerable emolument to him, his high character and well known assiduity and humanity attracting many unfortunate cases of mental derangement to his care.

In obtaining private practice, Dr. Rigby owed his eminent success more to the cultivation of his great mental powers, than to what is termed management, or knowledge of the world. His merits



were, notwithstanding, properly appreciated, his rank, acquirements and experience placing him at the head of his profession, in this part of the kingdom, for a long series of years. As Surgeon, Accoucheur, or Physician, he was appealed to in cases of the greatest difficulty. He was constantly consulted at great distances. In short he possessed the confidence of the public in a medical view, to a degree not often obtained out of the metropolis, and rarely have so many of the wealthy and enlightened inhabitants of this city and the county surrounding it, united to heighten the reputation of one man.

In the treatment of disease he was gentle and cautious, and confided sufficiently in the powers of nature. A medical friend whom he attended through a severe illness, made the following remark: "Knowing the activity of his mind and his love of speculation, I expected to find him at the bed-side fond of new remedies and active measures, and never easy unless he was *meddling* with disease. I was never in a greater mistake. Nothing could be more plain and judicious than his practice. The most certain means were employed for the attainment of unquestionable objects, and beyond this little was done, many a long visit ending in his advising me to do nothing. Sydenham-like, he never suffered his speculations to blind or pervert his observations." Regarding prevention as being



equally valuable as the cure of disease, Dr. Rigby continually advised and practised temperance, activity and habits of industry. He won the approbation of those whom he approached by a natural urbanity of manners, rather than by studied politeness. Trusting the more trifling complaints, about which we are often consulted, to time and to nature, he reserved himself for serious cases, to which his attention was invariably unremitting; and the kind friend, animating companion and skilful physician were combined in him, as often as he approached the bed of real sickness. His humanity to the poor was one of the most amiable parts of his character, and was strongly displayed at every period and in every transaction of his life. He entered the hovel with as little reluctance as the mansion, and till age had visibly preyed upon him, he refused not to visit the lowest of his fellow creatures who sought his assistance. Both as Surgeon and Physician he gave his gratuitous advice to the poor, to the comfort and benefit of a numerous list of sufferers. Fortunate was it for the public, that circumstances existed which prevented Dr. Rigby from retiring completely from his professional pursuits, whilst health and life were spared to him. These circumstances were produced by his love of activity and good works, strengthened by a second marriage in 1803 to a lady, whose natural acuteness and high accom-



plishments adapted her to be the companion of such a man. Twelve children were the fruits of this marriage, *four* of whom (*three* boys and *one* girl) were the extraordinary production of one birth, and were born on the 15th of August 1817. Such a family by their gaiety and cheerfulness would have furnished (had there been need of it) the best antidote to the tedium so often accompanying the decline of life; but to Dr. Rigby they could only afford a stimulus to continue the lucrative practice of his profession, for in his domestic circle it was his nature to be cheerful, and he possessed, even in his old age, a plentiful fund of anecdote, which he diffused amongst his family and friends in the simplest and most agreeable style.

In tracing the history of this remarkable man, there is such a variety of materials, that, in order to approximate those relating to each other, I am obliged repeatedly to retrograde, instead of noticing events in chronological order. The Norwich Philosophical Society, which now boasts so many respectable members, had its small beginning at the instigation of the late Dr. Reeve, in October 1812. Dr. Rigby immediately joined it, and in the following year read two essays upon coloured light or shadows, containing many singular and original observations, which have never been published. In 1815, the Society having resolved,



instead of electing a Member to the Chair at each Meeting, to have one President for the whole Session, the Members present, with one voice, nominated Dr. Rigby as the proper person to fill the honourable situation, on account of his great talents, venerable age and ardent encouragement of science. During seven succeeding Sessions Dr. Rigby was unanimously chosen to the same office, and the dignity, regularity and patience with which he filled the situation will cause his memory to be revered by every individual amongst us, who partakes of the pleasure and instruction which our meetings rarely fail to afford. Besides the account of his visit to Holkham, which has been before adverted to, Dr. Rigby furnished, less than a year ago, a fourth essay on "Inflammable Air or Hydrogen Gas," in which he took an able view of the chemical and physical properties of this air, and the numerous purposes to which it has been or may hereafter be applied in science, manufactures and domestic œconomy. This paper was delivered with much force and animation by the author, when he had just completed his seventy-third year, and it was the last essay which he wrote upon any subject.

Dr. Rigby had enjoyed a life of almost uninterrupted health, which he maintained by an originally strong constitution and the strictest habits of temperance. If in any respect he was



intemperate, it was in his bodily and mental exertions in performing public and professional duties, from which he seldom relaxed. Until a very advanced period of his life, he was so little acquainted with fatigue, that he never expressed himself to be weary whilst any thing remained for him to do, and in spite of the incessant bustle in which he lived, his mental and bodily powers were apparently so little diminished in vigour, as to promise to his friends the enjoyment of his residence amongst them for many years to come. When his brother-in-law, the celebrated Dr. Parry of Bath, was seized with a paralytic stroke in the October of 1816, Dr. Rigby was so much affected by it, that the melancholy event which so suddenly checked the useful career of that most able man dwelt continually upon his mind, and he began to curtail still further his already sufficiently temperate allowance of drink and food. A mild malt liquor, the only artificial beverage he had for many years allowed himself, was relinquished for water; and the quantity of animal food he took, at all times moderate, was diminished. With this regimen Dr. Rigby continued to perform his usual avocations as Physician and Magistrate, and seldom omitted to close an active day by a visit to his country-house. Still no changes were perceptible in him beyond the usual and gradual effects of old age, until the summer of the



present year, when his friends observed him to be evidently declining, drooping in posture, and wasting in body and limbs. In this state, however, he still possessed his usual vivacity of mind, and his professional avocations seemed to renovate him and call forth new energies ; but he was languid afterwards, and required more than his usual rest to restore him for the occupations of the following day. On the Wednesday previous to his last illness, after seeing patients in the town, he performed a journey of sixty miles in the country ; the next evening he presided as usual at this Society, and exercised the same patience and attention to the subject discussed as he had invariably been accustomed to do on former occasions. After spending the Friday actively abroad, he retired early to bed, with the most distressing feelings of sinking and languor. The pulse became intermitting and most irregular. Wine, in quantities that would at other times have intoxicated him, produced no effect. An intermitting pulse, with slight palpitation of the heart, to which he had for the last twenty-five years been occasionally subject, had impressed him with an idea of organic derangement in the heart or great blood-vessels being the cause of his symptoms, and under these impressions he resigned himself to the fatal result, which he deemed unavoidable. Accustomed to the enjoyment of almost uninterrupted health, he commonly bore with impa-



tience all slight complaints which interfered with his professional and literary pursuits; but on this occasion there was a degree of coolness and resignation that augured unfavourably, as if he were attacked by an overpowering enemy, against whom it was in vain to contend. If however, like other men who have fewer motives for living, he wished to live, unlike many, he feared not to die; and if the last moments of his good life were embittered by any painful feeling, or the calmness with which he resigned himself to his sensibly approaching end for a moment disturbed, it was by the reflection that an amiable widow and eight children would survive, to need his guidance and protection. On the Monday an extreme degree of jaundice appeared without relief. The mouth became parched—the secretions diminished, and almost ceased—the breathing was so slow that nature seemed to hesitate about going on—nights of delirium were followed by days of transient sensibility and possession of mind. In this hopeless state, most painful to witness, though without pain to himself, he continued until the following Friday, when all the symptoms of dissolution seemed to be at hand. Still he lingered till next day, the 27th October, when the struggle ended—he was no more! The friend of science and of humanity fell under the resistless hand of Him who gave us life!



The lifeless fabric was explored, in the hope of determining to our satisfaction the unavoidable cause of the fatal termination. Besides an adhesion of the pleura at the upper part of the right lung, in consequence of inflammation at a remote period, there was no morbid appearance in the cavity of the chest. In the size and appearance of the heart there was nothing preternatural, and its valves, as well as the great vessels leading from it, were perfectly healthy. The right auricle and ventricle were occupied by one continuous mass of bright yellow fibrine, of remarkable firmness, passing into the irregularities of the auricle, and between the columnæ carneæ of the ventricle, so as not to be removed without great difficulty. This was so firm and even tough, that it must have been several days forming, during the languid and irregular state of the circulation. In the abdomen all the viscera had a healthy appearance, save the liver, which was no otherwise deranged than from a tinge of bile; in the gall bladder there was a considerable gall stone; but the gall ducts were pervious, and could have suffered no other obstruction than what might arise from viscid bile. What struck us most on laying open the cavity of the abdomen was the smallness of all the hollow viscera, the thinness of the omentum, and the little quantity of adipose substance about them. The stomach was contracted and empty. The ileum,



instead of being distended with air, in addition to its other contents, was also contracted and nearly empty. The jejunum in most parts was not larger in diameter than my little finger. The colon and rectum were equally contracted, and void of contents, so that the duodenum was larger than any other part of the intestinal canal. From these researches I am persuaded that too great abstemiousness, joined with excessive mental and bodily exertion, and the diminished power attendant upon accumulated years, untimely took from us a man for whom nature had marked out a longer existence.

The remains of our lamented associate were unostentatiously conveyed to the church-yard adjoining his favourite residence at Framingham, where the thick and lofty plantations he so long watched the growth of, are the only objects which shelter and adorn the spot. One of the many friends who have visited his grave, conceived a most appropriate and expressive couplet for his tomb-stone :

A monument for RIGBY do you seek?

On every side the whispering woodlands speak.

In turning from the solitude and silence of the grave, to speak again of the living man, I wish I could describe his character as perfectly as I knew it. To the most unbounded philanthropy he joined a zeal which overcame him on certain occasions, a



retentive memory, extensive reading, quick recollection, and an imagination ever active and productive. Above all, he was without affectation, and scarcely possessed the ordinary caution that is obtained by intercourse with the world; his few errors and faults were consequently all before the public; his very secrets were talked of by him in the streets at mid-day. There was in short less guile in him than in any man I ever knew. That which he thought right he would on all occasions fearlessly pursue, nor could abuse suffered, opposition offered, or injury sustained, drive him from the good purpose he had undertaken to execute. His boldness and originality marked him for a public character, and enabled him to become conspicuous in society as physician, philanthropist, magistrate, philosopher, politician and agriculturist. Warm as were his feelings of regard and of dislike, no resentment excited in him was ever so strong that it could not be subdued, no offence committed against him so great that it could not be forgiven, and he never advanced so far in the path of error that he would not on conviction retrace his steps. Adorned by philosophy, he adorned it in return. The point which falsely judging philosophers have attempted to teach us to aim at as the highest in human attainment, was that which he sat out from at his birth, and removed further from as he advanced in life—I

*"I wit a Man, simplicity a Child."*



mean *indifference*. Rigby was indifferent about nothing. No human being so abject in situation, so remote in place, that he would not sympathize with his wants and feel disposed to relieve them; no worm so insignificant that he would not save it from ruin, if innoxious to surrounding creation; nay, it would vex him if even a plant were placed out of the rays of a genial sun or in an unfit soil. Indifference it may be well for an inferior individual to aim at, shut up within himself, and meditating only how he shall pass through life with the least annoyance; but *Rigby's* mind was too noble to regard self alone; he sought to find out truth—to originate good—to advance knowledge—to diffuse happiness—how could *he* be indifferent? Had he been a statesman, he would have benefitted nations—a merchant, his genius and powers of invention would have brought fresh treasures to our shores. In whatever branch of human pursuit such a man engaged, he was sure to improve it; and fortunate may it be considered that he embraced a liberal profession, in which it was consistent to administer personally to the comforts of so great a variety of classes in society, and at the same time to pursue extensively and successfully the various branches of literature and science. There may be those who have pleased more, who have offended fewer, but rarely shall we meet with the man who has benefitted so many.



In contemplating Dr. Rigby as the President of this Society, to which honourable office he was seven succeeding sessions elected, we must consider him as having greatly contributed to its continuance and prosperity, by the part he took in our discussions, the papers he furnished, and the dignity and urbanity he exercised in the chair assigned him. He was so regular in his attendance, that there are few evenings on which he was not present; so punctual, that he was always ready to receive us; in short, he was so identified with this Society, that a time must elapse ere we can persuade ourselves that it exists without him. To encourage the junior members, to elicit the vivid sparks of eloquence from the more experienced, and to bring to light the first openings of genius and acquirement, in whatever class they might be found, was his constant endeavour; and every new member added to our list brought a fresh pleasure to his breast. Let his bust ornament the room consecrated to our intellectual meetings, as the friend of science and its useful cultivator. With us he delighted to spend his life—with us he finished it; the last discussion in which he took a part, the last evening of pleasure that he spent abroad, was *here*—and of him most truly may it be said:

“Habuit eundem finem vivendi ac philosophandi.”

Thus, Gentlemen, at your command, have I



endeavoured to perform a last and most trying duty to a friend, whom I admired for his talents, esteemed for his virtues, loved for his open and disinterested conduct through life. In the different feelings which thus crowd together for the ascendancy, I know there are many present who participate with me; but those only can feel to the full extent what I do, who were equally intimate with him in his public vocations and private habits. To me his memory will ever be dear, and a lively impression of his person, mind and character, will remain with me to the latest period of life. The course of nature must proceed. Time makes impression on the strongest body, united to the strongest mind. The best and wisest men must soon cease to live—save in the recollection of surviving friends. Yet even in the bitterest grief there is a luxury, which they can best express whom time has robbed of those they valued the most highly. Although a tear suffuse the eye on every such occasion, how often do we delight, secluded and absorbed, to picture to ourselves the form of our departed friend—his gesture, gait—his lineament of feature—perchance to hear him speak, advise, instruct—recount the tales that have before amused us—and so on; till the overstrained imagination bursting, destroys the sweet delusion, and restores us to *the world where he is not!*

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*"A monument of R. as you seek  
Look round:—these smiling Good Land  
Speak*

37

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