

PLAN

INAUGURAL DISSERTATION,

ON

What of Theory! #

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BY

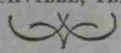
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What of Theory.

Man's superiority in the scale of existence, is manifestly given him by the possession of a thinking, reflective and rational faculties. The mere possession of these, however, give not a shadow of contrast within himself considered, but it is their exercise, that reflects the superior intellectual and immortal principle, and secures to him the innumerable blessings of their faithful culture, from which flows the rich rewards of man's humanity, and the virtues of his organized government. These faculties beam like a light from some promontory, when we consider the early

and friendless condition of man, and contrast them with the present, for it was when the venoms of an out-raged world were poured upon him, that ignorance and inexperience hung like a pall over his benighted and untutored mind. The peculiar condition and circumstances which surrounded man, seemed necessary that he should be endowed with a thinking, theoretical and speculative talent. For scarce had the sun of seven days sunk behind the western hills, when he was driven from the possession of his birth-right, and bid to call into action his physical and intellectual being, ^{that he might live} producing thus the first impression of life and decay, and before the mind had received the first conception of disease, or the sensation

some been touched by sickness and pain; the Healing Art was called into requisition, for man lay a lifeless victim.

Thus may the young mind, bewildered and astounded, date its speculative notions of life and death, and the first induction of disease; and its earliest endeavor to institute a Science that has since dived into the mysteries of life and Organization, and sought a remedy for every disease that afflicts our race.

From the imperfections of the various notions and doctrines held in relation to disease and medicine, one would be led to believe, that they afforded no basis for a science; but a cursory survey of the early condition of society and literature, and the tide of

opposition that was every where met by those who endeavored to promulgate their opinions, seems a sufficient cause for the imperfection, confliction and distraction, in relation to the Healing Art. Ignorance and superstition too, offered a mighty opposition, and wielded a sceptre of manipulated thralldom, that baffled and crippled all the efforts of a science, that seemed to its young and ardent advocates to bless the world.

The researches in Anatomy were violently opposed by a superstitious Priest-hood, with penalties of death, and they were prosecuted mainly upon the hypothesis of analytical reasoning which led to many errors in science and mischief in practice. The fabled existence of a God of medicine gave mu-

ch respectability, and its claims to a Divine origin removed many difficulties and inspired its votaries to new energies and research.

The removal of disease by the therapeutical agency of medicine and the various phenomena observed in pathological conditions of the system, gave rise to many inductions, speculations, hypotheses and theories; but their fallacies were successively overturned by new ones until disputes and controversy had involved the whole in much obscurity and doubt. About this time arose the mighty champion of free thought and reason, and by his sagacity, research and learning made many improvements, and brought the profession to a much higher degree of eminence.

Not content with the dogmas and empirical practice of his predecessors, and stimulated by a love of his art, he devoted himself zealously to its cultivation and advancement.

He was thus enabled to throw light upon the deductions of experience, and clear away the false theories with which medicine had been loaded by those who had no practical knowledge of disease, and bring it into the true path of observation under the guidance of practice and reason. Altho' he acquired a living fame, and established irrefutable doctrines and principles that commanded the admiration and swayed the mind of the profession, and gained respect

7
in the course of Law down to the
present day; yet ^{he} wrote much that is
involved in doubt and obscurity.

His Anatomy was defective - his
Physiology abounds in errors, and
some of his theories ^{are} illy founded.

But it is due to the immortal
Father of Medicine, to say, that the
ideal of twenty three hundred and
seventeen years experience, has
undiminished the lustre of many
of his teachings, nor lessened the value
of his practice.

To the time of Galen,
little or no improvement was made.

The success of his practice, gave
him great distinction; but his
fine theoretic and speculative tal-
ent & writings encountered much

opposition. He mystified the writings of Hippocrates, and the "splendor of his talent so completely dazzled his successors", that his opinions swayed the practice for many centuries. The discovery of the circulation by Harvey, gave rise to new doctrines, the promulgation of which, met the severest controversy.

Boerhaave, Sydenham and others, by the brilliancy of their intellects, and faithful observation, acquired great reputation; but added little to the time honored doctrines of Hippocrates, except in the treatment of exanthematous diseases. They refuted however many false notions, and Sydenham by careful attention to the phenomena

9
of disease, made many important
improvements; and none deserve
greater praise than he, for the timely
change of treatment in the disease
of Small Pox.

This has theory changed
from time to time upon the mere
hypothesis of new discoveries, or the
~~or~~ ~~the~~ success of new experience

A little later, and we find the
world excited upon the new and
splendid theories of the great
French Theorist Boissau.

The light and force of his reason-
ing, the ingenuity of his discrim-
inations, and the plausibility of
his subtle speculations upon Phy-
siology, and Pathology, drove conviction
upon the mind of the Profession,

and revolutionized all France in the treatment and management of diseases. A new era sprang forth in the History of medicine, and his doctrines were made resplendent by the honor of his name. But it was reserved for later Philosophers to expose his premises, refute his theories, and bring medicine back to the light of truth by the test of experience.

The day of personal ~~authority~~ and universal sway ^{in our sciences} has passed and the great American principles of free thought and free speech, prevail, and the world is flooded with theories and doctrines, and the profession loaded with an endless variety and number of medical ^{works}, all endeavoring to establish the few facts known by

new procepes and new theories.

Phlegmatic diseases yield but few demonstrative facts which indicate a simple treatment; but yet volume after volume, and treatment after treatment has been offered to the profession.

Theoretical essays upon false premises, or mistaken exceptions have been written, enjoyed a brief period of existence, and papered away before the light of truth and investigation.

The entailed misery that many of these teachings have produced, can only be imagined when we think of the great abuse of the King of all medicine, Calomel.

The commonly received

opinion in regard to the inflam-
 atory character of the blood; and
 that maintained by Simon and
 Andral, - two great lights of the
 profession - must exhibit beyond all
 points of disputation, many Patho-
 logical and Therapeutical errors
 in modern medicine. For the
 fibrine in excess or deficiency
 is the great Mariner's Compass to
 Therapeutical vessels upon unkn-
 own and inexperienced seas. And
 if the great Simon is correct, what
 of practice

This with many other
 facts, plays with much sport
 upon the theoretical ignorance
 of practitioners; and none suffer
 worse than those who theorize.

and practice upon Typhoid disease. All watch over and meet what they wisely term indications, but no one offers a specific for the noxious malarial. The beautiful analytical theory that maintains that the glands of the bowels suffer from a deficiency of the plastic element of the blood, does not account for Pneumonia or Peritoneal inflammation.

I pass many theories in Chemistry (even of the present day) and of the laws of generation, uterine growth and contraction, together with numerous unsettled points in Physiology, the notions as maintained by the Philosophers of the South and West concerning

the cause of that class of fevers denominated malarial. The beautiful theory of the great source of life and decay of the animal and vegetable kingdoms, and the sustenance of one upon the other by the different processes of nutrition and animation, and the great destruction ^{of decay} of the latter acting injuriously upon the former, seems to be too well founded in fact to deny.

When great destruction and decay of the vegetable kingdom, or forests went on before the progress of civilization in England, and the soil was stirred, loaded with vegetable remains - malarious diseases were rife; but as time advanced

and the country become "cleared up." These diseases become less frequent until they are now unknown. Such is true of other sections.

The settling of new countries whose climate is favorable is followed by the same diseases. The generation of many gapes, poison to the human economy, in marshy regions is an opinion that has long been maintained; and the frequent occurrence of malarial affections, and the strong affinity these poisons have for moisture and their transmission by fogs and winds have established the belief that they

are due to the decomposition of animal and vegetable matter. The term of their occurrence too has added much strength to this belief. But the many exceptions that seem to oppose this belief have invited much discussion and investigation.

Dr Ferguson has shown that malarial diseases of the most fatal character have existed in many regions which were perfectly destitute of both vegetable growth and deposition.

The great Philosopher of the West Dr Drake has left us much of his writings on the

this subject and the distinguished Dr. Bowling of the Washburn University has thrown much light upon this subject by his investigations.

The geographical ranges, and types of these diseases have been lucidly pointed out by him. But this question is yet unsettled; like many others—the exception is often taken for the Law and the Law for the exception.

Notwithstanding theory after theory has passed away before the slow tread of truth and experience, it has done much to elucidate, adorn, and beautify science, and like the Pillar of Jive

To the children of Israel, has led
science through the abstruse
and difficult paths through
which it has had to travel—
beginning with ^{the} primal condi-
tion of man, touching all
succeeding ages until the present
light of its practicable truths
is shed over a universal
world.