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AN

INAUGURAL DISSERTATION

ON

Diagnosis

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Before we can become conversant with disease, it is necessary that we study its language.

To a person unacquainted with diagnosis, disease speaks in an unknown tongue, and symptoms are as unintelligible as the gesticulations of idiocy, or the ~~or the~~ science of grammar to the untutored savage.

Pain always indicates disease, but the seat of pain is by no means the locality of disorder, by the mysterious connection of organs in the humane system, distant and apparently dissimilar parts frequently, 'and as regard some always' become deranged from the same cause, and sometimes the wildest confusion is produced among the different organs from causes almost

inappreciable, for instance a worm in the alimentary canal of an infant may under some circumstances produce no effect at all, while under the same circumstances so far as the eye of science can perceive, the consequences of its presence may be restlessness, picking of the nose, grinding of the teeth, or perhaps convulsions, and fatal spasms.

It would be unphilosophical to say that like causes did not produce like effects, but I do say that frequently so far as the most experienced eye can observe, the circumstances which determine the variety of symptoms, and vary their nature, and intensity, are hidden from the most experienced and practical eye, in the present state of our knowledge

of the science of medicine.

The anatomical connection of tissues, and organs as well as the physiological relations of these parts often aid the physician in his inquiry into disease and delights him in tracing cause to effect, yet he too often has reason for the humiliation of his pride, when he can only know that one thing sometimes follows another, the one a cause, and the other an effect, or perhaps only a consequence, and he has not the power to tell how or why it is so, so far then he acts upon such knowledge he humbly feels that he is related to an empiric, a character which he has always taught himself to despise.

Science has unfolded the medium through which both ^{al} non

and morbid impressions are transmitted from one part of the system to another.

The physiology of the nervous system is only partially understood, but the functions of this mysterious apparatus is so connected with the principles of life, either as the cause or effect of vitality, that the *modus operandi* of the nerves will probably ever remain an enigma to the medical philosopher, as obscure and occult as the relation of mind to matter.

Experience has collected a great number of facts, and as far as some of these facts are found usually to depend upon each other, one has been called a symptom of another, and upon this collection of material in the museum of science, is founded the science of symptomatology, and

if this branch of medicine was always the same the practitioner would feel as confident in his course as the pilot who steers by the needle or the north star, but the physician can never be certain, while his guide is liable to err. Now it often happens that the symptomatology of a disease is deranged, and then it may lead the physician like a blind guide into snares, and fatal errors, among the diseases prevalent in every climate.

Verminous affections of infants are perhaps the most frequent of any other, and their symptoms often the most plainly marked, yet I have often heard physicians say, and such is the language of the books, that there is only one certain sign of worms, and that is the appearance of them in the

alvine discharges, still however these symptoms indicate irritation of the bowels, and the physician may know that fact, although he may not know whether, worms cause the train of symptoms or any other offending substance, and he may be left to guess which is the cause, luckily however it makes but little difference generally whether it be the one or the other, provided he does not persist too long in unsuccessful efforts directed to one before he tries to remove the other; under this state of things medicine must always, to some extent be an uncertain science, and perhaps it should be so for our good, for it is intended that man should know not what a day may bring forth. There is still enough known in this mystic science to encourage

the energy of ambition, and genius, in acquiring it, and though we be often deceived, and mistaken in our opinion and diagnosis, we can learn to trace disease in its various forms by the light of experience, and rational deductions so far as ^{to} satisfy our minds and greatly relieve suffering humanity.

An acquaintance with diagnosis is sufficient to distinguish the scientific physician from the boasting quack, who lives upon his own imprudence, and the credulity of his unsuspecting victims.

To understand the symptoms in disease it is necessary to be acquainted with the anatomical connections of organs, and also their nervous relations, and sympathies; this implies a great deal, and the physician who expects to be a scientific man misses wide the marks

if he calculates to be upon life;
for, he must be a poor pathologist
who is not a good physiologist,
If a physician could not associate one
thing with another, and trace their
relations, medicine would be but
a confused mass of isolated facts,
presenting a chaotic confusion, which
the mind would fail to remem-
ber, and memory ^{would be} taxed with an
infinite number of tasks.

I have before intimated, that sy-
mptoms were the language of dis-
ease, and it should not discourage
us to study them, because they
sometimes mean one thing, and
sometimes another.

It is a peculiarity of our own
language, and any person can un-
derstand its variations by study-
ing its etymologies, so is it with
disease, the symptoms of disease
have their deviations and modifications

of some of the German physicians
has spent itself in diagnosticating
between the thousand and one
cutaneous eruptions that are to
be treated the same way, and
in the scarcity of our knowledge
perhaps their talents and in-
vestigations would have discovered
facts of more importance, had they
been dictated in more useful re-
sults.

The symptoms of disease gener-
ally need much elucidation,
and diagnosis cannot advance
until more attention is paid to
sympathies, I use the word sym-
pathy because I think it is
just as appropriate as any other,
although much objection has
been made to it, it is just as
significant as reflex action or any
other term, conveying the same
meaning until the nature

involve the digestive organs for a long time while the later will react upon the spine, and thus increase each other, at which it may be difficult or impossible to say which is the first link in the disease without inquiring how the disease first originated, and perhaps then the cure of the older disease may not relieve the later, on account of its functions being disturbed, and so long, and long as local, or constitutional irritation, has settled there, may require specific treatment for their removal.

Happily for the science of medicine in many diseases similar in their symptoms, their treatment is generally ^{as} similar as their features, and causes are generally treated in accordance with their symptoms, yet it is by no means always

the case, it is sometimes a little
~~difficult~~ to discriminate between
neuralgic, nervous, and inflammatory
affections, wherein a mistake may
be of serious consequence, for nervous
and inflammatory diseases are treated
in precisely opposite ways, and
what ~~would~~ ^{will} cure one would perh-
aps increase the other, upon the
principle of *ubi irritatio ibi
fluxus*, a neuralgic disease will
present all the local appearances
of inflammatory action.

The periodical affections known
as *sun pain* and *Zie dolon* are
attended with great pain, suffusion
of face, redness of the eyes, and
sometimes a free discharge of the
tears, and from the nose, showing
great determination of the blood
to the parts affected, presenting
all the outward signs of severe
inflammation; now, who would

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think of using the lancet for the removal of these affections, especially, when they attack weakly persons; it is here absolutely necessary to judge correctly, for bad consequences must result in a mistake of the physician, who would, instead of using antiperiodics, and tonic medicines, resort to depleting and debilitating means; in such cases, the medical attendant should examine all the symptoms and make every deviation from health.

Inflammatory affections generally enlist the sympathies of the heart and arteries, and develop more constitutional disturbance than do nervous diseases.

There ~~are~~ ^{is} still a great variety of disorders, that belong to both classes; inflammation can put on more varied and different characters than the pathologist can possibly imagine.

It often becomes important to distinguish between common and specific inflammations, and more mischievous blunders could hardly be conceived than a mistake between a common phlegmon and chancre, or simple ulcer; yet much discussion is found in the books as to the appearances of the Hunterian chancre; and the physician often has to depend upon the character or declaration of his patient.

There are however distinguishing marks in the true chancre, which ordinary ulcers do not display, but how few can declare with any ^{degree of} certainty, whether a Syphilitic ulcer exists or not; if the patient should persist in concealing his former habits of lewdness, avow his previous ^{incontinence} and strong induce

often exists to deceive in such cases, even though it may be better that a free acknowledgement be made.

There cannot be more difference among the profession on any one question than the distinctness; peculiarity of cancerous affections; some physicians profess to cure cancers almost every day, while others positively declare that a genuine cancer never was cured, and even go so far as to ~~say~~ ^{make} the curability of an ulcer a diagnostic test that it is or was not cancer; and so it is with consumption, though not so much now as formerly, for it appeared a short time ago that between the stethoscope, pleximeter and cod liver oil that the days of consumption were numbered and it would have to be degraded to ranks of trifling disorders,

But the probability is that mistakes have been made in guessing the name or nature of the disease, or that the disease has learned a mode of defense that now defies the Phosphate of lime, Cod oil &c and goes on its desolating course as usual.

In the south, febrile diseases are very common, and since the days of Johnson who wrote on the diseases of the tropical climates, and after him Co's of Kentucky, and physicians of the Mississippi valley, have generally charged the liver with being the cause of nearly all fevers; instead of examining the general system, they have narrowed the compass of their investigations and simplified Pathology almost into unity by declaring the liver to be the first link in the chain of diseased action,

venae cava, the portal circle, and
the liver as the great first cause,
and I might say with Pope least
understood.

There was not an organ in the
system, but what could take on
inflammation by sympathy with
the liver, and all that was wanted
to locate the disease was to suppose
some organ weakened as they called
it, and it would be kind enough
to become the security for the
liver, by assuming to bear its
responsibility.