

OF THE  
IMAGINATION,

AS A CAUSE AND AS A CURE OF  
DISORDERS OF THE BODY;

*Ex Libris* EXEMPLIFIED BY *B. Smith*

FICTITIOUS TRACTORS,

*Coll. By* AND *Med. Scri*  
EPIDEMICAL CONVULSIONS.

“DECIPIMUR SPECIE.” HOR.

Read to the Literary and Philofophical Society of Bath.

BY

JOHN HAYGARTH, M. D.

F. R. S. LOND. AND EDINB.

OF THE ROYAL MEDICAL SOCIETY AT EDINBURGH, AND OF THE AMERICAN  
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WILLIAM FALCONER, M. D. F. R. S.

THESE FEW PAGES ARE ADDRESSED,

AS A MEMORIAL

O F A

MUTUAL, CORDIAL, AND CONSTANT FRIENDSHIP,

FOR THIRTY-SIX YEARS;

B Y

J. HAYGARTH.

Bath, Jan. 1st, 1800.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT

PHILOSOPHY 300

LECTURE NOTES

BY [Name]

DATE

## TRACTORS.

THAT faculty of the mind which is denominated the Imagination, has been the subject of two very elegant compositions in the English language, in prose and poetry, by ADDISON and AKENSIDE. It has not wholly escaped the notice of medical writers, but merits their farther investigation. This slight Essay may, perhaps, incite others to prosecute this inquiry more fully, in order to extend the power of physicians to prevent and cure the maladies of mankind.

### §. I.

In physick as well as in philosophy, to discover the cause of an effect is frequently a very nice and difficult investigation. The success of medical practice essentially depends upon this faculty of sagacious discernment. One who is carried away by  
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## TRACTORS.

every wind of doctrine, and who recommends every new medicine which is in vogue and becomes popular, without considering the evidence and fair probability of its efficacy, will frequently administer inert, and sometimes injurious remedies, to his patients.

“The Tractors have obtained such high reputation at Bath, even among persons of rank and understanding, as to require the particular attention of physicians. Let their merit be impartially investigated, in order to support their fame, if it be well founded, or to correct the publick opinion, if merely formed upon delusion. Such a trial may be accomplished in the most satisfactory manner, and ought to be performed without any prejudice. Prepare a pair of false, exactly to resemble the true Tractors. Let the secret be kept inviolable, not only from the patient, but every other person. Let the efficacy of both be impartially tried, beginning always with the false Tractors. The cases should be accurately stated, and the reports of the effects produced by the true and false Tractors be fully given, in the words of the patients.”

This hint, and in these terms, I communicated to Dr. FALCONER. He entirely approved the idea, and very readily consented to make the proposed trial upon the most proper cases which could be selected from his patients in the General Hospital.

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We contrived two wooden Tractors of nearly the same shape as the metallick, and painted to resemble them in colour. Five cases were chosen of chronick rheumatism, in the ancle, knee, wrist, and hip. One of the patients had also gouty pains. All the affected joints, except the last, were swelled, and all of them had been ill for several months.

On the 7th of January, 1799, the wooden Tractors were employed. All the five patients, except one, assured us that their pain was relieved, and three much benefited by the first application of this remedy. One felt his knee warmer, and he could walk much better, as he shewed us with great satisfaction. One was easier for nine hours, and till he went to bed, when the pain returned. One had a tingling sensation for two hours. The wooden Tractors were drawn over the skin so as to touch it in the *slightest* manner. Such is the wonderful force of the Imagination!

Next day, January 8th, the true metallick Tractors of PERKINS were employed exactly in like manner, and with similar effects. All the patients were in some measure, but not more relieved by the second application, except one, who received no benefit from the former operation, and who was not a proper subject for the experiment, having no existing pain, but only stiffness of her ancle. They felt (as they fancied) warmth, but in no greater degree than on the former day.

This trial was witnessed by Dr. FALCONER, Mr. NICHOLLS, surgeon of the Hospital, Mr. FARNELL, apothecary of the Hospital, and myself, on both days; and on the second day by Mr. PHILLOTT, also surgeon of the Hospital. It need not be remarked, how completely the trial illustrates the nature of this popular illusion, which has so wonderfully prevailed, and spread so rapidly; it resembles, in a striking manner, that of Animal Magnetism, which merited the attention of FRANKLIN, when ambassador from America, and of other philosophers at Paris. If any person would repeat these experiments, it should be done with due solemnity. During the process, the wonderful cures which this remedy is said to have performed ought to be particularly related. Without these indispensable aids, other trials will not prove as successful as those which are above reported. The whole effect undoubtedly depends upon the impression which can be made upon the patient's Imagination.

This method of discovering the truth, distinctly proves to what a surprising degree mere fancy deceives the patient himself; and if the experiment had been tried with metallick Tractors only, they might and most probably would have deceived even medical observers. Yet this test of truth is perfectly candid. A fair opportunity was offered to discover whether  
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the metallick Tractors possessed any efficacy superior to the ligneous Tractors, or wooden pegs.

In the decision of this question, it ought to be duly considered that the chronick rheumatism is a very obstinate and permanent disorder; that out of the five cases, (being all who were subjected to the trial) four of the patients believed themselves immediately, and three remarkably, relieved by the false Tractors; and that this report is founded upon the unanimous testimony of five medical witnesses. This evidence is not inferior to what is alleged in favour of the true Tractors, especially if it be considered that the cases which have been published are selected from many which were unsuccessful, and passed over in silence. This success of the false Tractors can only be exceeded by the exaggerated stories which, for some months past, have been reported in every company with increasing amazement and credulity.

The proposer of these experiments, if he could have produced authentick and conclusive proofs of the real efficacy of the metallick Tractors, would, with equal frankness, and much greater satisfaction, have given his testimony in their favour, as another means of administering relief to the sufferings of mankind. If any proselyte to Perkinism should still believe in the superior virtue of this remedy, both the witnesses of these recent events and the patients above-mentioned are ready to satisfy any farther inquiries on this subject.—Bath, Jan. 24th, 1799.

P. S. The

*P. S.* The most intelligent of my medical and other friends advised the immediate publication of these observations, as containing information of considerable importance. But with a view to obtain farther and more decisive observations on this subject, the substance of this paper, accompanied with a pair of wooden Tractors, was sent to two medical friends, to Sir WILLIAM WATSON in London, and to Dr. MONCRIEFFE in Bristol, requesting that similar experiments might be repeated in both those cities. The annexed letter from Mr. SMITH was the fortunate result of this communication.

“ TO JOHN HAYGARTH, M. D.

“ Sir,

“ Mr. DYER some time since communicated to me the contents of a letter addressed by you to Dr. MONCRIEFFE. Considering it the duty of every regular practitioner to check the dangerous progress of empiricism, I instantly volunteered my services to assist in the design of investigating the merits ignorantly ascribed to Perkinean Electricity. I confess freely to you, that the very respectable American, and even British, testimonies by which it was recommended to the publick, at first staggered me exceedingly. I could not believe, that the gentlemen mentioned in the pamphlet of PERKINS would wilfully bear false witness, and I could scarcely imagine them to have  
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been so deceived. Your hints, however, enabled me to adopt a plan which quickly dissipated the illusion; and I sincerely hope and trust, that the result of the experiments will open the eyes of the publick to so gross an imposition. I must premise that the following were all Hospital patients, and that for the most part their medicines were, for the time, altogether suspended.

I. "ROBERT THOMAS, aged forty-three, who had been for some time under the care of Dr. LOVELL, in the Bristol Infirmary, with a rheumatick affection of the shoulder, which rendered his arm perfectly useles, was pointed out as a proper object of trial by Mr. T. W. DYER, apothecary to the house.

"Tuesday, April 19th, having every thing in readiness, I passed through the ward, and (in a way that he might suspect nothing) questioned him respecting his complaint. I then told him, that I had an instrument in my pocket which had been very serviceable to many in his state; and when I had explained to him how simple it was, he consented to undergo the operation. In six minutes no other effect was produced than a warmth upon the skin, and I feared that this *coup d'essai* had failed. The next day however he told me, that "he had received so much benefit, that it had enabled him to lift his hand from his knee, which he had in vain several times attempted on the Monday evening, as  
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the whole ward witnessed." The Tractors I used being made of lead, I thought it adviseable to lay them aside, lest (being metallick points) the proofs against this fraud might be less complete. Thus much, however, was proved—that the patent Tractors possessed no specifick powers independent of simple metals.

“ Two pieces of wood, properly shaped and painted, were next made use of; and in order to add solemnity to the farce, Mr. BARTON held in his hand a stop-watch, whilst Mr. LAX minuted the effects produced. In four minutes, the man raised his hand several inches, and he had lost also the pain in his shoulder, usually experienced when attempting to lift any thing. He continued to undergo the operation daily, and with progressive good effect; for on the 25th he could touch the mantle-piece.

“ On the 27th, in the presence of Dr. LOVELL and Mr. J. P. NOBLE, two common iron nails, disguised with sealing-wax, were substituted for the pieces of mahogany before used. In three minutes “ he felt something moving from his arm to his hand,” and soon after he touched the Board of Rules, which hung a foot above the fire-place. This patient at length so far recovered, that he could carry coals, &c. and use his arm sufficiently to assist the nurse; yet previous to the use of the spurious Tractors “ he could no more lift his hand from his knee than if a  
hundred

hundred weight were upon it, or a nail driven through it;" as he declared in the presence of several gentlemen, whose names I shall have frequent occasion to mention. The fame of this case brought applications in abundance; indeed, it must be confessed, that it was more than sufficient to act upon weak minds, and induce a belief that these pieces of wood and iron were endowed with some peculiar virtues.

2. "THOMAS ELLIS, a negro, from a chronick rheumatism in his upper and lower extremities, had been incapable of walking without support, or feeding himself for four months; he came under my care on the 19th of April. At first the Tractors produced no effect upon his thighs, and but little upon his arms. In the course of a few applications, however, he began to move his limbs better, and his nights were not so restless. In the course of this case, the nails, lead, and wood were used alternately, but there did not appear to be the least difference in the result. Mr. LANGWORTHY, the agent for Mr. PERKINS in this country, usually made use of the patent Tractors for twenty or thirty minutes at a time; but my patients crowded in upon me so fast, that I had not leisure to bestow more than four or five minutes upon each: yet such effects were produced as were almost incredible. It usually happened, that the skin was soon warmer, and occasionally darting pains were produced, which sometimes were troublesome  
long

long after the operation, and at others were of shorter duration. He complained also, that the cicatrix of an old scald upon his arm smarted a great deal. He now began to mend so fast, that he could comb his hair very readily, and on the 29th, in the presence of Dr. LOVELL, and several other gentlemen, he put on his jacket, and walked across the ward without a stick or the least assistance.

“ To those who have not been eye-witnesses to the force of the Imagination, these accounts may appear exaggerated; but they can be too well attested to need any assertions of mine as to their veracity. These things were not done in a corner, but under the inspection of the faculty of the house, and in the presence of the whole ward.

3. “ With the permission of Dr. FOX, I operated upon JAMES PRIOR, who had been under his care three months with a paralysis of the flexor tendons of both hands. This was certainly a case in which little was to be expected, and I feared would prove a stumbling-block to my reputation. In three minutes, however, (the Tractors having been drawn from the elbow to the wrist) he felt the back of his hand become sensibly warmer; and after four minutes had elapsed, he could actually touch the palm of the hand with the middle finger of his left hand, which he had not been able to effect for more than two months before. The right arm did not appear

to be much affected at first, but in a few trials he began to have some power over that also; the left hand was, in the course of a fortnight so far restored, that he could almost clench his fist; and soon afterwards he left the Hospital. By accident I since met him, when he shewed me, with much pleasure, that he still retained the use of this hand; but the other had relapsed into its former useless state.

4. "April 20th, I requested Mr. BARTON to operate upon PETER SEWARD, aged 32, who had, for four years, been troubled with pains and weakness in his right arm. From the minutes taken by Mr. LAX, I learnt that he had experienced a good deal of pain during the operation. The next day I was assisted by Mr. BERNARD and Mr. LOWE, jun. and as the case is rather curious, I shall copy verbatim the notes written upon the spot. In one minute, "feels the pain coming on at the same place as yesterday; the limb feels warm; pain higher up, and sharper;" in two minutes, "pain increases;" in three and a half, "very acute, darting towards the collar-bone, and begins to give him so much uneasiness that he will not have it done any longer;" perspires profusely, and is gone to bed. It was fortunate for me that the above gentlemen could bear witness to the remarkable effects of the Imagination; it was, notwithstanding, I believe, generally thought in the house that the account was exaggerated. On the 25th, however,  
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in the presence of Messrs. JOLLIFFE, BARTON, GAISFORD, EMERY, and WYLDE, Dr. LOVEL made use of one bit of mahogany, whilst I gently drew down his arm the point of the other. When he sat down "he was perfectly easy." In a few seconds, "the pain commenced as before;" in two minutes, "it was very acute at the elbow and collar-bone;" in four, "he became very uneasy," looked very red in the face, "and begged the operation might be discontinued." His request was complied with; and he immediately went to bed, with a pulse at 120. Three quarters of an hour after (being still in bed) I asked him how he felt himself? He replied, that "he was in more pain than when the surgeon took five pieces of bone from his leg in a compound fracture, which he unfortunately met with in Wales." It may, perhaps, be thought that he feigned all this. I cannot assert that he did not; but he could have no point to gain by such a conduct, and he certainly must have been a very excellent mimick to deceive so many people.

"This case excited much curiosity; and on the 2d of May, Dr. MONCRIEFFE, Messrs. NOBLE, YEATMAN, CLAYFIELD, PROBERT, NOTCUTT, LAX, and JOLLIFFE, were assembled to view the effects produced by these two wonder-working pieces of wood. The man dreaded the operation so much, that he requested to have it done in bed. Mr.

CLAYFIELD



CLAYFIELD and myself used the Tractors. In a few seconds, “a spasm was evident upon the *biceps flexor cubiti*;” in two minutes, “pain in the arm and collar-bone;” in three, “increased in the hand and arm-pit, and continued in pain some time after the operation,” which had considerably accelerated his pulse. This patient could scarcely be prevailed upon to submit any longer to their use, although he confessed that “upon the whole he had received much benefit.”

“By this time the affair began to acquire publicity, and many visitors, both out of the profession and medical men, were eye-witnesses to the effects of these spurious Tractors; and in order to render the trials the more ridiculous, two pieces of bone, of slate-pencil, and tobacco-pipes painted, were used occasionally, with the same success. Dr. BEDDOES, to whom I communicated these facts, lent me a pair of the real patent Tractors, for the purpose of trying them when my own failed; but I declare, that in no instance whatever were they used.

5. “JOHN PEACOCK, a patient of Dr. NEW’S, had been afflicted for four months with a weakness of the hip, and severe rheumatick pains, brought on by working in a damp coal-pit. “At first the Tractors occasioned considerable pains, and very restless nights; (I use his own words) but after a few trials, he began to sleep unusually well, had fewer attacks of pain, and  
appeared

appeared confident and happy in the idea that a remedy had been discovered for his complaints." With such a subject, the event may be easily anticipated. This morning he came to thank me for my services, and he was always exceedingly grateful to Mr. BARTON and Mr. GAISFORD, who operated upon him in my absence. I cannot help mentioning one circumstance respecting this man. He came to me one day complaining of a violent settled pain in his forehead, which, he said, "almost distracted him," and requested me to "*draw it out.*" The pieces of mahogany were drawn gently over his forehead for a minute and a half, "when the throbbing began to abate, and in two minutes had nearly ceased." In about three or four minutes the man arose from the chair, saying, "God bless you, sir; now I am quite easy." He was attacked with this pain only once afterwards, which affected his vision considerably, but it was removed as easily as in the former instance.

"All these cases turning out so happily, it may be imagined that they are *selected*. I declare, however, that they are the first that occur in the minute-book; and if I could imagine it necessary to add more, there are several remaining, equally successful.

"Mr. LANGWORTHY and myself were fellow-students at St. Thomas's and Guy's Hospitals, in the years 1794-5, and we have occasionally met in  
Bristol,

Bristol, during his residence as an agent of Mr. PERKINS at the Wells; but he must excuse me, if I adopt the motto,

“ Amicus PLATO, sed magis amica veritas.”

“ In thus exposing this revival of MESMER’s impositions, I do no more than comply with the above-mentioned gentleman’s own request. He openly threw down the gauntlet to the faculty, and insidiously begged them to examine “ *how the Patent Tractors produced such wonderful effects?*” and very cunningly led the inquirers through the mazes of Galvanism, in hopes of bewildering their judgments.

“ It would be as ridiculous in me to call in question the veracity of the accounts published by Mr. PERKINS and others, as it would be unjust to degrade these marvellous pieces of metal (stamped with the magick word *Patent*) below the level of ten-penny nails or tobacco-pipes; since there can be no good reason why they should not be all equally efficacious. Let the world then judge between us;—for myself, I declare, that I have neither extenuated, exaggerated, nor set down aught in malice.

“ The gentlemen whose names I have taken the liberty to insert are well known, and will most assuredly contradict me, if I have advanced any thing but the truth. I remain, Sir, &c.

“ RICHARD SMITH.

“ Bristol Infirmary, May 16th, 1799.”

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The facts above related are sufficient, and more than sufficient, to discredit the supposed virtues of metallick Tractors; but the success of the trials, both at the Bath Hospital and Bristol Infirmary, brought more important objects into view. They prove to a degree which has never been suspected, what powerful Influence upon diseases is produced by mere Imagination. Being desirous, that on this interesting subject, the whole evidence should be impartially laid before the publick; I requested the favour of Mr. SMITH to relate the result of his subsequent experiments with fictitious Tractors. He has sent me the following full and instructive report, authenticated by the most respectable witnesses.

*Postscript to Mr. SMITH's Letter.*

6. "EDMUND WILLIAMS applied to me with a *stillicidium urinæ*. The man was a poor feeble subject, and appeared to be impressed with the idea that nothing would be serviceable to him; but he was "willing to try any thing." In one minute after the points of the wooden Tractors had been drawn in various directions about the *pelvis*, he said, "I begin to feel something jumping in my inside;" and in three minutes and a half the determination of blood to the capillary vessels of the skin was evident, giving him the sensation of warmth, to which he had been a long time a stranger. On the

27th he reported that his hips had been unufually comfortable and warm; this induced me to perfevere, efppecially as the patient himfelf was become lefs fceptical as to the powers of my Tractors. The gentleman who affifted me having borrowed the pieces of ftick, I was obliged to make ufe of the two ten-penny nails, which (as I have before mentioned) were difguifed with red and black fealing-wax, and on that account, had the dignified appellation of *Rouge et Noir*. In fact, it was often neceffary to play the part of a necromancer—to describe circles, fquares, triangles, and half the figures of geometry, upon the part affected, with the fmall ends of the Tractors. During all this time we converfed upon the discoveries of FRANKLIN and GALVANI, laying much ftrefs upon the power of metallick points attracting even lightning, and conveying it to the earth harmlefs. To a more curious farce I never was witnefs; we were almoft afraid to look each other in the face, left an involuntary fmile fhould remove the mask from our countenances, and difpel the charm.

“But to return to my patient:—In one minute, “he felt a smarting in his loins, and warmth of his fkin;” in two, “heat increafed;” in four, the operation ceafed, when he faid “the fkin was very warm.” A by-ftander asked him, ‘if he thought himfelf mended?’ He replied, “he would foon

answer his question," and upon sitting down, suddenly exclaimed, "yes, I am better." It was demanded, 'how he knew it?' "When I used to sit down, (said the man) there was always a spirt of water thrown from me, but now I can prevent it." The experiment was two or three times repeated, and with the same result; in fact, the patient absolutely regained in a great measure the power of retention afterwards.

"It may be asked, 'what physical alteration could so suddenly have taken place in the fibres of the phincter muscles, that from a state of pallid relaxation they should again be endowed with the power of performing their office?' Permit me, in my turn, to ask the inquirer, "what is the *primary cause* of the purple blush which instantaneously overspreads the cheek of the guilty when accused?" Should it be answered, 'because the vessels are suddenly distended with blood,' *that* will be readily granted, as the proximate cause; but it is the *remote power* which directed that operation that I wish to be demonstrated. We shall be equally involved in the same dilemma; but the facts being established, our inability to account for them signifies nothing.

"During the month of March he was regularly treated with the pieces of stick, at the end of which time the parts appeared to have recovered much of their healthy tone, and he said that "he had *more feeling*

*feeling* than before." I requested him to explain himself. He did so, by telling me that "when he first came to me, he could not distinguish whether his loins were touched by a metallick or a soft substance, but now he could tell me readily whether I had a glove on or not."

7. "The next case which came under my notice was that of BENJAMIN QUARMAN, who had received but little benefit from medicine, having been obliged for some time to hobble upon crutches with much difficulty, and in great pain. He attributed his illness to a violent cold, caught by working in the mud on a pair of dock-gates; I must add, however, that he had been all his life a plumber, which contributed, perhaps, not a little to his indisposition. Upon the first application of the Tractors (which were formed from a piece of bone) to his thigh, he experienced a pricking sensation; in a few minutes he could hardly persuade himself that they did not cut him; at the end of the operation he could use his limb more freely, but complained that "I had driven the pain into his knee." He was under the care of Dr. MONCRIEFFE, who was present when Mr. LAX relieved him, in a few minutes, of a pain which had been for some time fixed in the shoulder-blade. This man continued upon our list until he was under the necessity of leaving the Hospital; but he had no reason to regret the confidence he reposed

in us, as he recovered considerably the use of his lower extremities, and was able to comb his hair easily, which the stiffness and pain in his shoulder had heretofore prevented him from doing.

“ At his departure, QUARMAN was very inquisitive respecting these instruments, and wished much to know whether it were possible to purchase them for less than five guineas, (the price set down in Mr. PERKINS’s pamphlet) as he was convinced a perseverance in their use would completely restore him. He eyed them very wishfully, and I could plainly see that he hoped I would either present them to him, or at least grant him the loan of them. I confess that I was somewhat embarrassed by my situation;— I felt a strong inclination to render him happy, by complying with his wishes, yet the dread of detection obliged me to deprive him of his panacea. A few days since he requested permission to attend as an out-patient, for the purpose of undergoing the operation, with which, of course, I readily complied; indeed, he is so exceedingly grateful for the benefit he has received, that I could scarcely deny him any thing which would contribute to his comfort.

8. “ THOMAS OSBORNE had been a stout hearty seaman, but returning from the banks of the Nile, was unfortunately shipwrecked in the Colossus, off Scilly. The fatigues he experienced, and the dangers to which he was exposed, had rendered his  
right



right leg almost ufelefs; he was, in confequence, difcharged the fervice. He complained chiefly of an intenfè pain under the knee-pan. Being in the fame ward with fome of the before-mentioned patients, he was induced to fubmit to the fame operation. This fubject complained much of the Tractors cutting him; which idea he had probably deduced from hearing QUARMAN (7.) exprefs himfelf in that manner. The fecond application “drew down the pain into his leg.” This gave me an opportunity of expreffing my determination of ‘getting it ftill lower down;’ intimating, that ‘when it was once in his toes, the next operation would free him from it entirely.’ It unfortunately happened, however, that the pain in his knee returned with great violence during the evening, and he curfed the Tractors as the caufe of his accumulated mifery. No intreaties could afterwards prevail upon him to make another trial; he faid, that “they had tormented him out of one night’s reft, and they fhould do fo no more.” This was the firft check I had experienced, and the reputation of my inftruments fuffered a little in confequence; as this fellow execrated them as much as they were adored by others.

9. “Nearly about this time, I undertook the cafe of HANNAH WESTON, who had been under the care of Mr. ALLARD, for a difeafe in the fhoulder. About three quarters of a year ago ſhe was attacked with

with a considerable inflammation in the joint, but the medical plan adopted in all probability prevented the formation of matter. The ligaments had, nevertheless, suffered considerably, and there was but too much reason to suspect that there had been also absorption of the cartilage, followed by a deposit of bone, which rendered the arm immoveable. She had long despaired of recovering its use, and appeared to be reconciled to its loss, complaining only of a violent rheumatick pain, which prevented her from pursuing her ordinary occupation. There certainly was but little to be expected from this patient, and so it turned out. Two pieces of slate-pencil repeatedly relieved her pain, and she has had lately but very few returns of it. She imagines, too, that she can move her arm better; it is clear, however, to an attentive observer, that she moves the collar-bone and shoulder-blade merely, and that the bone of the arm is as fixed in the socket as it was before.

“ Here, then, we have two cases which did not keep pace with our wishes, but I do not conceive myself at liberty to suppress them on that account; neither will they be found to be altogether uninstruative. We can at least deduce from them a proof, that the same causes, in different constitutions, will produce very different effects; for no man surely can believe that the specific difference of the substances

stances employed could vary the results so widely. It will prove to us, besides, that there are certain bounds to the powers even of the Imagination over the animal œconomy; and in the case in question we have seen, that although it may be equal to the prevention of periodical pain, it was incapable of stimulating the lymphatics to a removal of the newly-formed bone, or of restoring tone to the ligaments.

10. “ On the 24th of May, happening by chance to visit the physick-wards with Mr. DYER, a patient of Dr. NEW’s complained of great stiffness and occasional pain in the shoulder. I requested permission to attempt his relief by the new operation. In consequence, Mr. GAISFORD began to treat him in the usual manner with the pieces of pencil. In a few minutes he was seized with a tremor in his limb, and so violent a shivering fit, that it was judged prudent to desist for the present. The next day I wished to repeat the trial, but he positively refused; alleging that his arm was quite well, and therefore it would be putting him to useless pain. It is worthy remark, that this man’s countenance betrayed very evident symptoms of apprehension; and it was the general opinion of the by-standers, that the dread of experiencing a second time so severe a discipline induced him to make use of his arm so freely.

“ This

“ This case bears a striking resemblance to PETER SEWARD’S; both wonderfully depicting the powers of the Imagination. Had these effects followed the use of the Patent Tractors, it would have been termed *metallick influence*, and would have been considered as resulting from their mysterious combination of metals.”

### REMARKS.

Thus our inquiries, which were very successfully instituted at the Bath General Hospital, have been amply confirmed in the Bristol Infirmary by Mr. SMITH, and other most respectable witnesses. The whole constitutes a body of evidence, which, in several points of view, affords very important instruction.

The doctrine of Perkinism has been honoured by so many profelytes in America, England, and the continent of Europe, (even including some of the medical profession) that the question might, of itself, merit publick discussion. But I should not have been disposed to publish a refutation of an error which would probably be temporary, if the experiments above-recited had not appeared to warrant still more useful and general conclusions.

I will not affront the good sense of the reader by supposing that any apology can be required for the very innocent contrivance here practised, by inspiring  
a patient

a patient with the cheering affection of hope, and by slightly touching the skin with a piece of wood, in order to perform so important a professional duty as to discriminate true from false remedies.

When the event of our inquiries at the Bath Hospital was first communicated to the enthusiastick believers in the efficacy of the Metallick Tractors, the intelligence excited great commotions, accompanied with threats and abuse. A counter-declaration was to be signed by a great number of very respectable persons; but I felt much reluctance to provoke them to record their names as dupes of a popular delusion, by which they might be exposed to ridicule through life. By a little delay, all such apprehensions appear to be effectually obviated.

The influence of the passions upon disorders of the body has been excellently illustrated by physicians of superior understanding; as Sir GEORGE BAKER, Dr. FALCONER, and others. The experiments above related strongly confirm, and even extend, our knowledge on this subject. As many of the effects may appear wonderful, they required to be supported by the most respectable testimony. And none will deny that the witnesses here produced are sufficiently numerous, impartial, and intelligent.

But the reports above related may appear to some readers so very marvellous, as to require confirmation by analogous facts.

During

During the famous siege of Breda in 1625, the garrison was afflicted with the scurvy in a most dreadful degree. "When the Prince of Orange heard of their distress, and understood that the city was in danger of being delivered up to the enemy by the soldiers; he wrote letters addressed to the men, promising them the most speedy relief. These were accompanied with medicines against the scurvy, said to be of great price, but still of greater efficacy: many more were yet to be sent them. The effects of this deceit were truly astonishing! three small phials of medicine were given to each physician, not enough for the recovery of two patients. It was publickly given out, that three or four drops were sufficient to impart a healing virtue to a gallon of liquor. We now displayed our wonder-working balsams; nor were even the commanders let into the secret of the cheat put upon the soldiers: They flocked in crowds about us, every one soliciting that part may be reserved for their use. Cheerfulness again appears on every countenance, and an universal faith prevails in the sovereign virtues of the remedies. The herbs now beginning to spring up above the ground, we of these make decoctions, to which wormwood and camphor were added, that by the prevalent flavour of those, they might appear medicines of no mean efficacy. The stiff contracted limbs were anointed with wax melted in rapeseed or  
linseed

linseed oil. The invention of new and untried physick is boasted; and amidst a defect of every necessary and useful medicine, a strange medley of drugs was compounded. The effect, however, of the delusion was really astonishing; for many were quickly and perfectly recovered. Such as had not moved their limbs for a month before, were seen walking the streets sound, strait, and whole. They boasted of their cure by the Prince's remedy; the motion of their joints being restored by a simple friction with oil; and the belly now of itself well performing its office, or at least with a small resistance from medicine. Many who declared "they had been rendered worse by all former remedies administered, recovered in a few days, to their inexpressible joy, and the no less general surprize, by their taking (almost by their having brought to them) what we affirmed to them to be their gracious Prince's cure."

Dr. LIND, from whose Treatise on the Scurvy this passage is taken, observes, that "It is given us by an eye-witness,\* an author of great candour and veracity, who (as he informs us) wrote down every day the state of his patients; and seems more to be surprized with their unexpected recovery, than he possibly would have been, had he formerly been

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\* Frederic Vander Mye, de morbis et symptomatibus popularibus Bredanis, tempore obsidionis.

better acquainted with the nature of this surprising malady. The facts were then also notoriously known to many, at the time when he published his book, viz. the second year after they happened."

This excellent physician remarks, that "an important lesson in physick is here to be learned, viz. the wonderful and powerful influence of the passions of the mind upon the state and disorders of the body. This is too often overlooked in the cure of diseases; many of which are sometimes attempted by the sole mechanical operation of drugs, without calling in to assistance the strong powers of imagination, or the concurring influences of the soul. Hence it is, that the same remedy will not always produce the like effect, even in the same person, when given by different hands."

The 4th, 8th, and 10th cases, related by Mr. SMITH, though less successful, are not less instructive than the rest. They prove (what should be well understood) that the Imagination can cause, as well as cure, diseases of the body. They clearly establish one rule of medical practice which has always appeared to me highly important. In the best manner possible a patient ought to be always inspired with confidence in any remedy which is administered. But if a favourable opinion of it cannot be obtained, and especially if there be a marked prejudice against it, another (though a less powerful) medicine ought



to be preferred. This rule of medical conduct derives ample confirmation from the facts above related.

I have long been aware of the great importance of medical faith. Daily experience has constantly confirmed and increased my opinion of its efficacy. On numerous occasions I have declared, that I never wished to have a patient who did not possess a sufficient portion of it. These trials place its efficacy in a very conspicuous point of view, and must even astonish persons who have particularly attended to this subject; they clearly prove what wonderful effects the passions of hope and faith, excited by mere Imagination, can produce upon diseases.

On this principle we may account for the marvellous recoveries frequently ascribed to empirical remedies, which are commonly inert drugs, and generally applied by the ignorant patient in disorders totally different from what the quack himself pretends that they can cure. Magnificent and unqualified promises inspire weak minds with implicit confidence.

I have sometimes observed that the administration of a new medicine, even when its composition was known, if recommended to the publick with exalted praise, has been attended with great success—much greater than what was confirmed by future experience.

Hence

Hence we may discern the great advantage of medical reputation. This explains what has been frequently observed, that the same remedy will produce more beneficial effects when prescribed by a famous physician, than by a person of inferior character. In cases which have appeared to me desperate, but where the patient possessed implicit faith, I have seen very astonishing success; and have ascribed the recovery full as much to the influence of hope and great confidence, as to the medicinal quality of the drug. It is extremely fortunate, when the most powerful remedies of both body and mind unite their power to alleviate or remove a disease.

Medical practitioners of good understanding, but of various dispositions of mind, feel different degrees of scepticism in the remedies they employ. One who possesses, with discernment, the largest portion of medical faith, will be undoubtedly of greatest benefit to his patients. None but the ignorant can suppose that feigned or fictitious assurances of the virtues of a medicine will answer the same purpose. The language of self-conviction is undoubtedly the most persuasive. One must speak what he feels,

“ Si curat cor spectantis tetigisse.”

He should not express confidence to a patient which he does not possess, but he should express it with pathetic energy:

“ Formata enim natura prius nos intus ad omnem

“ Fortunarum habitum.”

In an irritable state of mind, strongly agitated between hope and fear, the words and looks of a medical friend, when they correspond with each other, have a very powerful and salutary influence:

“ Post effert animi motus, interprete lingua.”

HOR.

## §. II.

## EPIDEMICAL CONVULSIONS.

FROM some of the facts above detailed it appears, that when one case had made an unfavourable impression, others follow, by imitation, sympathy, or some other affection of the Imagination, which is not generally known, nor sufficiently suspected.— This interesting but obscure subject will be illustrated, in the best manner, by a short history of Epidemical Convulsions, which lately appeared in Anglesey, North-Wales. It chiefly affected the tenants of the Earl of UXBRIDGE and HOLLAND GRIFFITH, Esq. For this alarming malady I was consulted about three years ago. The words of my very intelligent correspondent, with brief remarks, will explain the nature of this distemper, and suggest the best means of checking this and similar calamities.

*Extract of a Letter from HOLLAND GRIFFITH, Esq.*

“ *Berw, Anglesey, Sept. 23, 1796.* I beg leave to offer to your most serious consideration a malady, which, within these two months, has for the first time been prevalent in this neighbourhood, and  
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which is, I believe, perfectly new in this country; never having been before remembered; as I am well informed, by the oldest inhabitants.

“ The first symptom of this disorder is a pain of the head, and sometimes of the stomach and side, not very violent; succeeded by an alarming catching or convulsion in the upper extremity, resembling St. Vitus’s dance; the pulse moderate, the body costive. In bed, the disorder is not so violent. The patients are pretty well in health, notwithstanding their great agitation of body, which continues with little intermission, causing the shoulders almost to meet by the exertion.

“ Yesterday I saw one of these unfortunate people for the first time, and being informed that several were affected in like manner in this neighbourhood, I assembled them together this morning, in number ten, and sent for an apothecary to meet them. A sight so shocking I never before beheld. He took from each of them about eight ounces of blood, which appeared in a dissolved state.

“ It appears to me extraordinary, that the disorder is confined to this neighbourhood alone, and only affects females from ten to twenty-five years old. This situation is low and marshy, but the marsh has been in some degree drained of late years, although not effectually; but I conceive the damps not so powerful as heretofore. My great desire is to relieve, if possible, these poor and unfortunate people, and I trust

in God that, with your advice, I shall again see them reinstated; that you may live many years to be a comfort to the distressed, is my earnest wish. I shall be extremely obliged to you, if you will favour me with your opinion, what you apprehend to be the cause of this complaint.”

In my answer to Mr. GRIFFITH I explained to him, that above thirty years ago an epidemical disorder of the nervous or hysterical kind had spread through the shire of Angus in Scotland, and that I had seen one of these patients in the Edinburgh Infirmary; that nervous disorders are very liable to be communicated. Thus, we all know that yawning is caught from one person to another. In like manner, hysterick fits (as I have seen) frequently spread in hospitals. In the Edinburgh Infirmary an hysterical patient infected three or four other girls in the same ward. When one of them was attacked, I have seen the rest fall down in succession into convulsions.\* For this reason, I proposed a rule, which was adopted in the Chester Infirmary, to exclude all convulsive disorders from the women's wards. On these considerations, I desired Mr. GRIFFITH to institute very minute inquiries in what manner some of the first Anglesey patients were attacked; and particularly whether they had not had such an intercourse

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\* A similar fact occurred to Dr. FALCONER, at Buxton. See his Dissertation on the Passions, p. 110.

with each other as to warrant a suspicion that the epidemick had spread by a kind of infection.

With this idea of the cause of these epidemical convulsions, I could have wished to concert some plan of cure which might make a salutary impression upon the Imagination; but being situated at near eighty miles distance from my correspondent and my patients, no measures of that kind could be attempted. I could not do better than order some antispasmodick medicines, and to desire Mr. GRIFFITH to use all his authority to prevent girls and young women from having any communication with persons affected with these convulsions, and to keep those who were ill of the distemper separate from each other, as much as possible. I warned him, that if these cautions were not observed, the epidemick might spread through the whole island of Anglesey.

The following accurate and judicious detail clearly explains and confirms this opinion.

*Extracts from Mr. GRIFFITH's Answers.*

“October 7th, 1796. Several of the patients have been here since I received your prescription, and I have minutely examined them, according to your directions.

“1st and 2d Cases. MARGARET WILLIAMS, a girl of thirteen years of age, was seized with a pain in her head on a Sunday evening about ten weeks

ago. On the Wednesday following, a convulsion in the upper extremities came on, which has continued ever since. When the convulsion is most violent, she becomes moidered, and in some degree loses her recollection. Her legs are very feeble, but not convulsed. She has the spasms while asleep, as she is told, but they never awaken her. She was affected about a fortnight, when a sister of hers, who lives in the same house, was attacked in like manner. They were sent to a town to experience electricity, by which, and some medicines, the sister recovered, but the girl in question was not much relieved. In a short time, her disorder returned as alarmingly as ever. Her stomach is a good deal swelled. She cannot ascribe her complaint to any particular cause.

“ 3d. CATHARINE PETERS was seized with a tremour at her heart, as she was washing linen. She was, for a time, deprived of breath. A convulsion came on, succeeded by fainting fits. She had seen the first patient, while in her convulsed state. She was rather *alarmed* at the appearance of the first patient; the only one, I believe, whom she saw in that state. Her age twenty-one.

“ 4th. HELEN THOMAS, while making hay, was taken suddenly ill. She was soon after seized with convulsions. She lost her hearing and recollection; was seized with a giddiness. She had been much affected by the first patient. The above girls had accidental communication with the first patient only.



“ The number of girls who have been attacked are eighteen. Two only are recovered. All of them, as far as I can understand, were taken much in the same manner with the first three. Their lower extremities are free from spasms, although they find themselves considerably relaxed. The least alarm throws them into a shaking fit. They have, in general, a hiccup. The anxiety of parents, sisters, brothers, friends, &c. for their recovery, is particularly obvious in this neighbourhood.”

“ *Oct. 8th.* I detained my letter until now, in order to give you some account of the operation of the essential oil, &c. which was given to the poor girls on Tuesday last, with wonderful success; for all who took the drops have uniformly experienced the good effects of them.”

“ *Jan. 18th, 1797.* I have no doubt of the truth of your observation relative to the contagious quality of this disorder.”

“ *Oct. 9th, 1799.* The whole number affected with these epidemical convulsions was twenty-four, all females, except one boy of seventeen years of age. They had all intercourse with each other. They are all considered as cured; yet two or three of them are susceptible of the least fright or sudden alarm, which brings on the convulsions in a slight degree, and of short duration.”

## OBSERVATIONS.

This subject is but imperfectly understood, and an useful Dissertation might be written on the diseases which are caused by powerful affections of the Imagination, if all the facts recorded by medical authors were stated, and compared with each other. But I am more disposed, and have had better opportunities, to delineate from Nature than from books. However, a few hints to illustrate this interesting inquiry, with references to the reader, who may wish more accurately to investigate the question, can be briefly stated.

1. It is universally known, that convulsive disorders are communicated to persons who live in the same house or apartment. Remarkable cases of this kind are related by KAAU BOERHAAVE;\* by the Commissioners of Paris,† who enquired into the power of animal magnetism; and by Sir GEORGE BAKER.‡

2. In like manner, convulsions in some instances are communicated from house to house, and become epidemical, by the intimate intercourse of persons in the same neighbourhood; probably by seeing the distressing convulsions, by hearing their alarming

\* Impetum faciens, c. ix. 406.

† See the Report of the Commissioners.

‡ See Medical Transactions, T. iii. xi.

shrieks, and listening to an account of their sufferings, feelingly and frightfully described. Of this kind of convulsive epidemics may be reckoned that which afflicted the female inhabitants in the shire of Angus in Scotland, about the year 1763 or 1764, above-mentioned. A like nervous distemper appears to have visited various parts of Germany about the year 1717.\* The famous epidemic of Sweden, † ascribed by LINNÆUS to eating charlock, may possibly be in some degree propagated in like manner.

3. Fevers, accompanied with violent convulsions, sometimes become epidemical, and both distempers may possibly be propagated by contagion.

Examples of this kind are recorded by WILLIS, ‡ to have happened in England about the year 1661; by MULLER, § in Germany, about the year 1741; and by BARAILON, || in France, in 1774.

\* Waldschemed de morbo epidemico convulsivo per Holstatiam grassante 1717. Apud Halleri Disp. celiv. T. vii. p. 518.

Wedel de morbo spasmodico maligno in Saxonia, Lusatia, &c. 1717. Apud Hall. Disp. eclv. T. vii. p. 551.

† Memoires de la Soc. Roy. de Med. à Paris, T. i. Mem. p. 319.

‡ Willis de spasms universalibus, qui in febris malignis male judicatis, et quibusdam anomalis excitare solent.

§ Muller de morbis epidemicis spasmodicis 1741. Apud Halleri Disp. vi. T. i. p. 78.

|| Sur une espèce d'epilepsie qui reconnoit pour cause le virus exanthematique miliare. Hist. de la Societé Royale de Medicine à Paris, T. i. p. 225.

See also Mem. de la Societé Royale de Medicine, T. i. p. 303.

These short hints will give the intelligent reader a sufficient clue, whereby he may prosecute this interesting inquiry. In the passages above-quoted, he will find references which will lead him in succession to many other authors, who have recorded facts of great importance in such an investigation.

It is proper in candour to acknowledge, that few of the authors above-quoted ascribe these epidemical convulsions to any affection of the Imagination; nor do all of them relate facts which might warrant such a conclusion. In general, they attribute these maladies to unwholesome food, or bad air. But the distinct manner in which Mr. GRIFFITH plainly discovered, and accurately described, the commencement and propagation of the Anglesey Convulsions, will induce the medical reader farther to investigate this subject, whenever an opportunity may occur.\* The principles here proposed are forcibly confirmed by the complete success of the

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\* The whole intelligence above-stated was confirmed by PAUL PANTON, esq; of Plas-Gwyn, in Anglesey, who was a visitor of the Literary and Philosophical Society, when this paper was read. He informed us, that hysterical disorders were very common in Anglesey; and that MARIA JONES, one of the servants at Plas-Gwyn, about 1790, was attacked with hysterick fits, and that four other female servants were infected by her with convulsions. This MARIA JONES was sent to the Chester Infirmary, to be my patient, but could only be admitted an out-patient, on account of the regulation above-mentioned. It is proper to remark, that Plas-Gwyn is placed in a dry situation, not at all likely to be affected by marshy effluvia.