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THE
ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BOMBAY
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MEMOIRS

OF

JOHN ABERNETHY, F.R.S.

WITH A VIEW OF
HIS LECTURES, WRITINGS, AND CHARACTER.

BY GEORGE MACILWAIN, F.R.C.S.,

AUTHOR OF

"MEDICINE AND SURGERY ONE INDUCTIVE SCIENCE;"
&c. &c.

20385 on

"The evil that men do, lives after them:
The good is oft interred with their bones."

SHAKESPEARE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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MEMOIRS OF ABERNETHY.

CHAPTER I.

“Opinionum commenta delet dies, naturæ judicia confirmat.”—CICERO.

“Time, which obliterates the fictions of opinion, confirms the decisions of nature.”

WHOEVER has wandered to the south side of Lincoln's Inn Fields, will have found himself in one of the “solitudes of London;” one of those places, which, interspersed here and there amidst the busy current that rushes along every street and alley, seems quite out of the human-life-tide, and furnishes a serene spot, a dead calm, in the midst of tumult and agitation. Here a lawyer may con over a “glorious uncer-

tainty," a surgeon a difficult case, a mathematician the general doctrine of probability, or the Chevalier d'Industrie, the particular case of the *habitat* of his next dinner; but unless you have some such need of abstraction from the world, these places are heart-sinkingly dull. You see few people; perhaps there may be a sallow-looking gentleman, in a black coat, with a handful of papers, rushing into "chambers," or a somewhat more rubicund one in blue, walking seriously out; the very stones are remarkably round and salient, as if from want rather than from excess of friction. The atmosphere from the distance comes charged with the half-spent, booming hum of population.

Immediately around you, all is comparatively silent.

If you are in a carriage, it seems every moment to come in contact with fresh surfaces, and "beats a roll" of continued vibrations; or, if a carriage happen to pass you, it seems to make more noise than half-a-dozen vehicles anywhere else. You may observe a long façade of irregular elevations—upright parallelograms

called habitable houses—but for aught you see, half of them may have been deserted; the dull sameness of the façade is broken only by half-a-dozen Ionic columns, which, notwithstanding their number, seem very serious and very solitary. You may, perhaps, imagine that they bear a somewhat equivocal relation to the large house before which they stand; you may fancy them to be architectural relics, inconveniently large for admission to some depository within, or that they are intended as a sort of respectable garniture to the very plain house which they partly serve to conceal or embellish; or quiz them as you please, for architects cannot do everything, nor at once convert a very ugly house into a very beautiful temple.

But stop there! for temple it is, ay, perhaps, as human temples always are, not altogether unprofaned; but not so desecrated, we trust, but that it may yet contain the elements of its own purification. It enshrines, reader, a gem of great value, which nothing extrinsic can improve, which no mere art can embellish; a treasure gathered from the ample fields of

nature, and which can be enriched or adorned only from the same exhaustless store. Though humble, indeed, the tenement, yet, were it humbler still, though it were composed of reeds, and covered in with straw, it would remain hallowed to science.

It holds the monument of the untiring labour of a great master, the rich garnerings of a single mind. The record, alas ! but of *some* of the obligations mankind owe to the faithful pioneer of a science, which, however now partially merged in clouds and darkness, and obscured by error, still exhibits through the gloom enough to assert its lofty original, and to foster hopes of better times.

The museum of John Hunter (for it is of that we write) is one of the greatest labours ever achieved by a single individual. To estimate that labour aright, to arrive at a correct notion of the man, the spectator should disregard the number of preparations—the mass of mechanical and manipulatory labour which is involved—the toil, in fact, of mere collection ; and looking through that, contemplate the

thought which it records ; the general nature of the plan ; the manner in which the Argus-eyed author has assembled together various processes in the vegetable creation ; how he has associated them with their nearest relations in the animal kingdom, and how he has traced the chain from link to link, from the more simple to the more compounded forms, so as to throw light on the laws dispensed to Man. The spectator should then think of the Hunterian portion of the museum as the exhausting harvest of half a life, blessed with no greatly lengthened days ; a museum, gathered not in peaceful seasons of leisure, nor amid the ease of undiverted thought ; but amidst the interrupting agitations of a populous city ; the persistent embarrassments of measured means, the multiform distractions of an arduous profession ; the still more serious interruptions of occasional indisposition ; and finally, amidst annoyances from quarters whence he had every right to expect support and sympathy — annoyances which served no other purpose but to embitter the tenure of life, and to hasten its termination.

Our space will not allow us to dwell more on this subject, or the museum just now. But where is our excellent conservator—where is Mr. Clift, the assistant, the friend, and young companion of John Hunter? He, too, is gathered to his rest. He, on whose countenance benevolence had impressed a life-long smile; he who used to tell us, as boys, so much of all he knew, and to remind us, as men, how much we were in danger of forgetting, is now no more. How kind and communicative he was, how modest, and yet how full of information; how acceptably the cheerfulness of social feelings mantled over the staid gravity of science. How fond of any little pleasant story to vary the round of conservative exposition; and then, if half-a-dozen of us were going round with him the “*conticuere omnes*,” when, with which his characteristic prefatory shrug, he was about to speak of Hunter. Then such a memory! Why once, in a long delightful chat, we were talking over the Lectures at the College, and he ran over the general objects of various courses, during a succession of years,

with an accuracy which, if judged of by those which had fallen within our own recollection, might have suggested that he had carried a syllabus of each in his pocket.

We had much to say of Mr. Clift; but, in these times of speed, there is hardly time for anything; yet we think that many an old student, when he has lingered over the stately pile reared by John Hunter, may have paused and felt his eyes moistened by the memory of William Clift.

When Mr. Abernethy lectured at the College, there was no permanent professor, as is now the case; no Professor Owen, of whom we shall have to speak more in the sequel. Both the professorship of anatomy and surgery, and also that of comparative anatomy, were only held for a comparatively short time.

It is not very easy to state the principle on which the professors were selected. The privilege of addressing the seniors of the profession has never, any more than any other appointment in the profession, been the subject of public competition; nor, unless the council have had

less penetration than we are disposed to give them credit for, has "special fitness" been a very dominant principle. Considering the respectability and position of the gentlemen who have been selected, the Lectures at the College of Surgeons, under the arrangements we are recording, were certainly much less productive, as regards any improvement in science, than might have been reasonably expected.

The vice of "system" could not be always, however, corrected by the merits of the individual. One result, which too commonly arose out of it, was, that gentlemen were called on to address their seniors and contemporaries for the first time, who had never before addressed any but pupils. It would not, therefore, have been very wonderful if, amongst the other difficulties of lecturing, that most inconvenient one of all should have sometimes occurred, of having nothing to say.

Mr. Abernethy was appointed in 1814, and had the rare success of conferring a lustre on the appointment, and the perhaps still more difficult task of sustaining, before his seniors

and contemporaries, that unrivalled reputation as a lecturer, which he had previously acquired! As Mr. Abernethy had been all his life teaching a more scientific surgery, which he believed to be founded on principles legitimately deducible from facts developed by Hunter; so every circumstance of time, place, and inclination, disposed him to bring Mr. Hunter's views and opinions under the review of the audience at the College, composed of his seniors, his contemporaries, and of pupils from the different schools. He was, we believe, equally desirous of disseminating them amongst the one class, as of having them considered by the others. At this time, no lectures of Mr. Hunter had been published; and Mr. Abernethy thought that, to understand Hunter's opinions of the actions of living bodies, it was expedient that people should have some notion of what Mr. Hunter considered to be the general nature of—"Life."

We hold this point to be very important; for all experience shows that speculation on the abstract nature of things is, to the last degree, unprofitable. Nothing is so clear in all

sciences as that the proper study of mankind is the Laws by which they are governed. Yet we cannot, in any science, proceed without something to give an intelligible expression to our ideas; which *something* is essentially hypothetical.

If, for example, we speak of light, we can hardly express our ideas without first supposing of light that it is some subtle substance sent off from luminous bodies, or that it consists in undulations, as we adopt the corpuscular or undulatory theory. It would be easy to form a third somewhat different from either, and yet to pretend to no more than to give a still more intelligible expression to phenomena.

Now this is, as it appears to us, just what Mr. Abernethy did. He did not speculate on the nature of life for any other reason, than to give a more intelligible expression to Mr. Hunter's other views. At that time, there was nothing *published*, showing that Mr. Hunter's ideas of life were what Mr. Abernethy represented them to be; they might have been remembered by men of his own age, but this was not very good for controversy; and as that was made a point

of attack,* it is well that the since collected "Life and Lectures of John Hunter," by Mr. Palmer, have given us a written authority for the accuracy of Abernethy's representations.

In theorizing on the cause of the phenomena of living bodies, men have, at different times, arrived at various opinions; but although not so understood, it seems to us that they all merge into two—the one which supposes Life to be the result of organization, or the arrangement of matter; the other, that the organization given, Life, is something super-added to it; just as electricity or magnetism to the bodies with which these forces may be connected. The latter was the opinion which Mr. Abernethy advocated as that held by Mr. Hunter, and which he honestly entertained as most intelligibly and rationally, in his view, explaining the phenomena.

That this *was* Mr. Hunter's view, a few

* "For this Hunterian Theory of Life, which its *real* "author" so stoutly maintains, &c., is nowhere to be "found in the published writings of Mr. Hunter."—See *Lawrence's Two Lectures (Notes.)*

passages from the work, as published by Mr. Palmer, will show. "Animal and vegetable substances," says Mr. Hunter, "differ from common matter in having a power super-added totally different from any other known property of matter; out of which various new properties arise."* So much for a general view. Next a reference to particular powers: "Actions in animal bodies have been so much considered under a chemical and mechanical philosophy, that physiologists have entirely lost sight of Life;" again showing how correctly Abernethy had interpreted Hunter's notion of the necessary "Key," as Abernethy phrased it, to his views; Hunter says: "For unless we consider Life as the immediate cause of attraction occurring in animals and vegetables, we can have no just conception of animal and vegetable matter."† Mr. Hunter, in relation to the idea of life being the result of organization, shows how faithful an exposition Abernethy

* Vol. I, p. 214. Note.

† Vol. XVI, p. 217.

had given of his views. "It appears," says he, "that the Living Principle cannot arise from the peculiar modification of matter, because the same modification exists where this principle is no more."—Vol. I, p. 221; and in the same page: "Life, then, appears to be something superadded to this peculiar modification of matter."

Then as to one of the illustrations employed by Abernethy. Hunter, after saying that he is aware that it is difficult to conceive this superaddition, adds: "But to show that matter may take on new properties without being altered itself as to the species of matter, it may not be improper to illustrate this. Perhaps magnetism affords the best illustration. A bar of iron, without magnetism, may be considered as animal matter without life. With magnetism, it acquires new properties of attraction and repulsion, &c."

Mr. Abernethy, as we have said, advocated similar views; and, we repeat, founded his reason for so doing on what he conceived to be the necessity of explaining Mr. Hunter's ideas

of life before he could render his (Hunter's) *explanation* of the various phenomena intelligible. In all of this he certainly was expressing Mr. Hunter's own views, with that talent for ornamenting and illustrating everything he discussed, for which he was so remarkable.

Abernethy multiplied the illustrations by showing the various analogies which seemed to him to be presented in the velocity, the chemical, and other powers of Life and Electricity; and with especial reference to the extraordinary discoveries of Sir Humphrey Davy, added such illustrations, as more recent achievements in chemical science had placed within his grasp; and thence concluding it as evident that some subtle, mobile, invisible substance seemed to pervade all nature, so it was not unreasonable to suppose that some similar substance or power pervaded animal bodies. He guarded himself, however, both in his first and again in his second Course of lectures, from being supposed to identify Life with electricity, in a long paragraph especially devoted to that object. In his second course, in 1815, he proceeded to enumerate John Hun-

ter's various labours and contributions to science, as shown by the museum; in which he gave very great interest to every subject, and in so popular a form, that we wonder now, when (as we rejoice to see) there are some small beginnings of a popularization of physiology, that there is not a cheap reprint of them.

With regard to the object in view, we cannot see how, as a faithful interpreter of John Hunter, Abernethy could have done less; and if any theory of life at all is to be adopted, as necessary to give an intelligible expression to phenomena, one can hardly quarrel with that which takes the phenomena of life on the one hand, and those of death on the other, as the means of expressing our ideas. When we see a man dead, whom we had contemplated alive, it certainly seems that something has left him; and whether we say "something superadded," the "breath" or "Life," or by whatever term we call it, we appear really to express in as simple a form as possible the facts before us. It seems to us, that after all John Hunter did little more; for the illustration or similitude by which we endeavour

to render an idea clear, has in strictness nothing *necessarily* to do with the idea itself; any more than an analogy, however real the likeness, or a parallelism, however close, represents identity.

We should have thought it, therefore, of all things in the world the least likely that any theory of Hunter's should have disturbed the harmony which ought to exist between men engaged in scientific inquiries. It shows, however, the value of confining ourselves to phenomena, and the conclusions deducible from them as strictly as possible. Nothing could possibly be more philosophical than the terms in which Mr. Abernethy undertook to advocate Mr. Hunter's views of life. His definitions of hypothesis, the conditions on which he founded its legitimate character, the modesty with which he applies it, and the clearness with which he states how easily our best grounded suppositions may be subverted by new facts, are very lucid and beautiful, and give a tone to the lectures, the very last calculated, as we should have thought, to have led to the consequences which followed.

CHAPTER II.

“ Oft expectation fails, and most oft there
Where most it promises.”

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

No man, perhaps, ever made a happier application of a Divine precept to the conduct of human pursuits than Lord Bacon, when he said that the kingdom of man founded in the sciences must be entered like the kingdom of God—that is, as a little child.

Independently of the sublimity of the comparison, it is no less remarkable for its practical excellence.

How many broken friendships, enmities, and heart-burnings might have been prevented, had

even a very moderate degree of the frame of mind, here so beautifully typified, been allowed to preside over human labour! How charitably should we have been led to judge of the works of others! how measured the approbation of the most successful of our own! No doubt in the pursuit of truth there is great difficulty in commanding that combination of fearlessness towards the world, and that reverential humility towards the subject, both of which are alike necessary; although the one may be more essential to the discovery of truth, the other to the enunciation of it.

To pursue truth regardless of the multiform errors and conventionalisms, amidst which experience has generally shown almost all subjects to have been involved; unmindful of the rebukes and obloquy by which too often the best conducted investigations are opposed and assailed; and yet to let no angry passion stir, no conviction that we are right engender an improper idea of our own superiority, or a disregard for the claims of others; this overcoming of the world, we had almost said, is intensely difficult,

for it is in fact overcoming ourselves. Yet we dare not say it is that of which human nature is incapable, for there is nothing that the heart suggests as morally right which is really impossible to us; and instances have not been wanting of the combination of the greatest knowledge with the most sincere humility.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that if there were anything especially calculated to bring down the cultivators of science and literature to the level of those who are regardless of the claims, or insensible to the attractions of either, we could hardly find a series of facts more fatally influential than are furnished by the disputes of men who have been employed in the cultivation of these elevating studies. Powerful intellects in teaching the comparative nothingness of man's knowledge seem to give great assistance in the acquisition of humility; but how few are the intellects of such power? The contemplation of nature, however, may, we conceive, infuse *feelings* of humility, which can rarely be attained by the efforts of intellect alone.

We have seen in Lord Bacon that the

highest powers of intellect afforded for a while no security against the subtle, but one would have thought feeble, suggestions of a degrading cupidity. We all know in literature, how much the fruits of intellect depend on the dominant feeling under which they are reared and nourished. Even men like Pope and Addison, who had little in common, but that which should elevate and adorn human nature, were so dragged down by the demon of controversy, that commencing with little more than the irritability of poets, they ceased only when they had forgotten even the language of gentlemen. In the controversy in question, Mr. Abernethy's position was a very difficult one, and one which shows how easily a man with the best intentions may find himself engaged in a discussion which he never contemplated; be wounded on points on which he was most sensitive, and yet defend himself with dignity, and without compromise of any of those principles which should guide a gentleman and a Christian.

Mr. Lawrence was appointed Professor of Comparative Anatomy in 1816; and we know

that Mr. Abernethy hailed his appointment with considerable interest. He was regarded as a gentleman of some promise, and had already, if we mistake not, distinguished himself by a singularly nice, level style of composition, as well as by careful compilation.

Nothing could seem more auspicious than such a prospect. Mr. Abernethy was a man remarkable for the original view he took of most subjects; a vast experience gathered from various sources by a mind combining vividly perceptive powers with great capacity for reflection, a conformation well adapted for opening out *new paths and extending* the boundaries of science. Abernethy was now to be associated with a colleague who had already manifested no ordinary talent for the graceful and judicious exposition of what *was already known*.

Nothing could have seemed more promising; nor was there anything in the opening of Mr. Lawrence's first Lecture which seemed calculated to baulk these expectations. His exordium contained an appropriate recognition of Mr. Abernethy, which, as we should only mar

by extract, we give entire. Having referred to the circumstances which immediately preceded his appointment, Mr. Lawrence thus proceeds :

“To your feelings I must trust for an excuse,
“if any be thought necessary, for taking the
“earliest opportunity of giving utterance to the
“sentiments of respect and gratitude I entertain
“for the latter gentleman (Mr. Abernethy).
“You and the public know and have long
“known his acute mind, his peculiar talent for
“observation, his zeal for the advancement of
“surgery, and his successful exertions in im-
“proving the scientific knowledge and treat-
“ment of disease; his singular happiness in
“developing and teaching to others the original
“and philosophic views which he naturally
“takes of all subjects that come under his
“examination, and the success with which he
“communicates that enthusiasm in the cause of
“science and humanity which is so warmly felt
“by himself; the admirable skill with which he
“enlivens the dry details of elementary instruc-
“tion are most gratefully acknowledged by his
“numerous pupils.

“ All these sources of excellence have been
“ repeatedly felt in this theatre. Having the
“ good fortune to be initiated in the profession
“ by Mr. Abernethy, and to have lived for
“ many years under his roof, I can assure you
“ with the greatest sincerity that, however highly
“ the public may estimate the surgeon and
“ philosopher, I have reason to speak still more
“ highly of the man and the friend, of the inva-
“ riable kindness which directed my early studies
“ and pursuits, and the disinterested friendship
“ which has assisted every step of my progress
“ in life, the independent spirit and the liberal
“ conduct, which, while they dignify the profes-
“ sion, win our love, command our respect for
“ genius and knowledge, converting these pre-
“ cious gifts into instruments of the most exten-
“ sive public good.”

This graceful exordium, so appropriate to the mutual relations of Mr. Abernethy and Mr. Lawrence, deriving, too, a peculiar interest from the circumstances under which it was

* March, 1816. Introductory Lecture to Comp. Anatomy. Published, July.

delivered, had also the rare merit of an eulogium marked by a comprehensive fidelity. There is nothing fulsome or overstrained; Mr. Abernethy's well-known excellencies were touchingly adverted to as matters with which all were *in common* familiar, whilst the necessarily more special facts of his social excellencies were judiciously brought out in just relief, and, as an appropriate climax, by one who appeared animated by a grateful and personal experience of them. It is distressing to think that anything should have followed otherwise than in harmony with that kindness and benevolence, which, whilst it forms the most auspicious tone for the calm pursuits of philosophy, confers on them the purifying spirit of practical Christianity.

Mr. Lawrence's first Lecture consisted mainly of an able and interesting *exposé* of the objects and advantages of Comparative Anatomy to the physiologist; pathologist, medical man, and the theologian; together with numerous references to those authors to whom the science was most indebted. The second Lecture was devoted to

the consideration and the discussion of various views which had been entertained of the living principle, or by whatever name we may designate that force which is the immediate cause of the phenomena of Living Bodies.

Amongst others, those entertained by Mr. Hunter and advocated by Mr. Abernethy were referred to; but in a tone which was not, perhaps, best suited to promote calm discussion, and which we may be allowed to say was unfortunate—a tone of ridicule and banter which was hardly suited either to the subject, the place, nor the distinguished men to whom it related; to say the least of it, it was very unnecessary. We do not quote these passages, because they are, we think, not necessary to the narrative, and could, we think, now give no pleasure to any party.*

In Mr. Abernethy's next Lectures at the College, he still advocated the rational nature of Mr. Hunter's views on Life; and in a most interesting exposition of the Gallery of the

* Introduction to Comp. Anatomy, by W. Lawrence, F.R.S. London, 1816.

Museum, opposed at every opportunity the views of certain French physiologists which Mr. Lawrence had adopted.

He did this, however, without naming Mr. Lawrence, and applied his remarks to the whole of those who had advocated the opinions that Life was the result of organization, as a "Band of modern sceptics."

Mr. Abernethy had, as he says, argued against a party, and studiously kept Mr. Lawrence, as an individual, out of view. He, however, argued roundly against the views advocated by him, and endeavoured to show that those of Mr. Hunter, besides being at least a philosophical explanation of the phenomena, had a good moral tendency; although he admitted that the belief that man was a mere machine did not alter established notions, and that there were many good sceptics; still he thought that the "belief of the distinct and independent mind "incited people to act rightly," &c.

In regard to the general influence of the state of France, he says: "Most people think "and act with a party," and "that in France,

“ where the writings of the philosophers and
“ wits had greatly tended to demoralize the
“ people, he was not surprized that their ana-
“ tomists and physiologists should represent the
“ subject of their studies in a manner conform-
“ able to what is esteemed most philosophical
“ and clever ; but that in this country, that the
“ mere opinions of some French anatomists
“ with respect to the nature of life should be
“ extracted from their general writings, trans-
“ lated, and extolled, cannot but excite surprise
“ and indignation in any one apprized of their
“ pernicious tendency.” There is no doubt that
there was at the time in this country a dis-
position in many people to disseminate very
many opinions on various subjects different
from those usually entertained ; and we believe
that this disposition was very greatly increased
by the well-intentioned, no doubt, but in our
view, injudicious means, employed for the sup-
pression of them.

We think it important to remember this,
because, in estimating fairly any books or lec-
tures, we must regard the spirit of the time

in which they were delivered. What would be judicious or necessary at one period, being of course obsolete or unnecessary at another.

In relation to the opinions of the nature of life, that which Mr. Abernethy alleged that he intended to apply to a party, Mr. Lawrence alleged that he held as personally applying to himself. Accordingly, the following course of Mr. Lawrence's Lectures, commenced with "A Reply to the 'Charges' of Mr. Abernethy." This Lecture, which it is impossible for any man, mindful of all the circumstances, to peruse without pain (especially if we include the notes), is couched in language of the most vituperative and contemptuous character; sarcasm, ridicule, imputation of corrupt motives by turn, are weapons wielded with the appearance of the most unrelenting virulence.

Those of the audience who had heard the graceful exordium, which we have quoted, to the first course of Lectures, and which so appropriately represented a just tribute to a great master and kind friend from a distinguished and favoured pupil, were now to listen

to a discourse, which was so charged with various shades and descriptions of ridicule and invective, as scarcely to be paralleled in the whole history of literary or scientific controversy. We have recently again perused the respective Lectures, and we are utterly at a loss to understand how the most sensitive mind could have found anything in Mr. Abernethy's Lectures to call for such a "Reply." As it appears to us, its very virulence was calculated to weaken its force, and to enlist the sympathies of people on the opposite side. We again forbear quotation. All we have to do is to show that circumstances of very unusual provocation, such as no man living could help feeling most deeply, and which bore on one who was acutely sensitive, never materially disturbed the native benevolence of Abernethy's disposition.

The dispute, however, soon merged into matters which the public regarded as more important. Mr. Lawrence, in the Lectures which followed, took occasion to make some remarks on the Scriptures, which gave great

offence, and led other writers to engage in a controversy of a theological rather than a physiological character. This, however, rather belongs to the writings and opinions of Mr. Lawrence, than the life of Abernethy. We will at once offer the very few observations which we alone think it necessary to make, either in justice to Mr. Abernethy or the profession.

CHAPTER III.

“Love all, trust a few,
 Do wrong to none : be able for thine enemy
 Rather in power than use ; and keep thy friend
 Under thine own Life’s key : be check’d for silence,
 But never tax’d for speech. What Heaven more will,
 That thee may furnish, and my prayers pluck down,
 Fall on thy head !”

ALL’S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

IN reviewing the facts of the foregoing controversy, we are anxious to restrict our remarks to such points as fall within the proper scope of our present object. These appear to us to relate to the mode in which Mr. Abernethy conducted his argument, as being legitimate or otherwise ; secondly, the influence the whole

affair had in developing one of the most important features in his character ; and lastly, the impression it produced for good or evil, on the public mind, in relation to our profession.

We would observe in the first place that the difficulty of Mr. Abernethy's position, was very painful and peculiar. We are not learned in controversy, but we should imagine that position to have been almost without parallel. Mr. Lawrence had been his pupil. As we have seen, Mr. Abernethy had been his patron and his friend, and moreover, he had been not a little instrumental in placing Mr. Lawrence in the Professor's chair. This instrumentality could not have been merely passive. Mr. Abernethy himself; was not a senior of the Council at that time ; at all events, he was associated at the College with men much older than himself, and must have owed any influence in the appointment, to an active expression of his wishes, supported by that attention to them which, though not necessarily connected with his standing at the College, was readily enough, no doubt, conceded to his talents and his reputation. His

singleness of mind in this business, was the more amiable, because had he been disposed to be inactive, there were not wanting circumstances which might not unnaturally have induced some hesitation on the subject. In the postscript at the end of Mr. Abernethy's published Lectures, delivered at the College, we learn that, "From an early period of his studies, Mr. Lawrence had been accustomed to decry and scoff at what I taught as Mr. Hunter's opinions respecting life and its functions; yet," he adds, "as I never could find that he had any good reason for his conduct, I continued to teach them in the midst of the controversy, and derision of such students, as had become his proselytes;" &c.

This could hardly have been very agreeable. The pupils were wont to discuss most subjects in their gossips in the Square of the hospital, or elsewhere; and many a careless hour has not been unprofitably so employed. On such occasions, those who were so inclined, would no doubt use ridicule or any other weapon that suited their purpose; and so long as any reasonable limits were observed, Mr. Abernethy

was the last person likely to take notice of anything which might have reached him on the subject. On the contrary, it was his excellence, and his often expressed wish that we should canvass every subject for ourselves, and he would enforce the sincerity of his recommendation by advising us with an often repeated quotation,

“Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri.”

Still, we cannot conceive that the desultory discussions at the Hospital, of which he might from time to time have accidentally heard, could have prepared him to expect that a similar tone was to form any portion of the sustained compositions of Lectures to be delivered in Lincoln's Inn Fields. When, however, he found his opinions ridiculed there by his friend and pupil, what was to be done? Was he to enter into a direct personal sort of controversy with his colleague in office at the College of Surgeons?

There was everything in that course that was inexpedient and repulsive. Was he to be

silent on opinions which he *knew* to have been Mr. Hunter's, and of the moral and scientific advantages of which he had a most matured conviction? That would have been a compromise of his duty. It was a difficult dilemma—a real case of the

“*Incidit in Scyllam qui vult vitare Charybdim.*”

If he avoided one difficulty, he fell into another. He tried to take a middle course—he argued in support of the opinions he had enunciated, and aided these by additional illustrations; and in contrasting them with those opinions which were opposed to him, he endeavoured to avoid a personal allusion to individuals, by arguing against a class which he termed the “band of modern sceptics.” Even this was a little Charybdis, perhaps; because it had a sort of name-calling effect, whilst it was not at all essential thus to embody in any one phrase the persons who held opposite opinions.

His position was intensely difficult. It should be recollected that Abernethy had

always been a teacher of young men ; that he had always taught what he conceived to be principles of surgery deducible from those delivered by Hunter ;—that he further believed that, to understand Hunter clearly, it was necessary to have a correct notion of the idea Mr. Hunter entertained of “ Life ;” and lastly, that in all his Lectures, Abernethy had a constant tendency to consider, and a habit of frequent appeal to what, under different forms, might be regarded as the moral bearings of any subject which might be under discussion. We readily admit that usually, in conducting scientific *arguments*, the alleged moral tendencies of this or that view are more acceptable when reserved to grace a conclusion, than when employed to enforce an argument ; yet we think that now, comparatively few persons would think the discussion of any subject bearing on the physical nature of Man complete, which omitted the very intimate and demonstrable relations which exist between the moral and the physical laws.

The point, however, which we wish to im-

press is, that Mr. Abernethy, in pleading the moral bearings of his views by deductions of his own, was merely doing that which he had been in the habit of doing on most other questions—it was merely part of that plan on which, without the smallest approach at any attempt to intrude religious considerations inappropriately into the discussion of matters ordinarily regarded as secular, he had always inculcated a straight-forward, free-from-cant, do-as-you-would-be-done-by tone in his own Lectures. This, while it formed one of their brightest ornaments, was just that without which all lectures must be held as defective, which are addressed to young men about to enter an arduous and responsible profession.

Abernethy stated nothing as facts but which were demonstrably such; and with regard to any hypotheses which he employed in aid of explaining them, he observed those conditions which philosophers agree on as necessary, whether the hypotheses be adopted or otherwise. He did not do even this, but for the very legitimate object of explaining the views

of the man on whose labours he was discoursing.

When those views of Mr. Hunter, which had been thus set forth and illustrated, were attacked, he defended them with his characteristic ability; and although we will not undertake to say that the defence contains no single passage that might not as well have been omitted, we are not aware that, from the beginning to the end, it contains a single paragraph that does not fall fairly within the limits that the most stringent would prescribe to scientific discussion.

The discussion of abstract principles is generally unprofitable. We think few things more clear than that we know not the intrinsic nature of any abstract principle; and although it would be presumptuous to say we never shall, yet we think it impossible for any reflecting student in any science to avoid perceiving that there are peculiar relations between the *laws* of nature and the human capacity which most emphatically suggest that the study of the one is the proper business, and the prescribed limit to the power of the other.

Still, the poverty of language is such, as regards the expression of natural phenomena, that necessity has obliged us to clothe the forces in nature with some attribute sufficiently in conformity with our ideas to enable us to give them an intelligible expression ; and whether we talk of luminous particles, ethereal undulations, electric or magnetic fluids, matter of heat, &c., we apprehend that no one now means more than to give an intellectually tangible expression of certain forces in nature of which he desires to discourse, or to teach the habitudes they observe, or the laws which they obey. This is all we think it necessary to say on the scientific conduct of the argument by Abernethy.

The public have long since expressed their opinion on Mr. Lawrence's Reply and Lectures ; and whatever may be regarded as their decision, we have no disposition to canvass or disturb it. There was nothing wonderful, however unusual, in a young man so placed, in a profession like ours, getting into a controversy with a man of such eminence as Abernethy, particularly on

speculative subjects. There were in the present case, to be sure, very many objections to such a position ; but these it was Mr. Lawrence's province to consider. On this, and many other points, we have as little inclination as we have right, perhaps, to state our opinion. Nevertheless, we must not omit a few words in recognition of Mr. Abernethy's efforts, and a few observations on the conduct of the governing body of the College at that time. In the first place, we feel obliged to Mr. Abernethy for the defence he made on that occasion : not from the importance of any abstract theory, but from the tendency that his whole tone had to inculcate just views of the nature and character of the profession. But we can by no means acquit the Council of the College, at the time of the said controversy, of what we must conceive to have been a great neglect of duty. There is, amongst a certain class of persons, an idea that the medical profession are sceptical on religious subjects ; and many of these persons, are people of whom it is impossible not to value the respect and good opinion. We never could trace any

legitimate grounds for the conclusion. On inquiry, it has always appeared to be nothing more than a "vulgar error," resting, as "vulgar errors" generally do, on general conclusions drawn by people who have deduced them from insufficient particulars.

Sometimes, the persons indulging in this idea have known a medical man whom *they consider* to be unstable in his religious views; another knows that Mr. A. or B. never goes to church; sometimes, even political differences have been held sufficient excuse for impugning the possessor of proper ideas on the all-important subject of religion. We have never been able to procure any reasonable data on which they could, with any show of justice, support so serious an imputation. For our parts, we know not how the necessary data are to be obtained, and therefore should shrink from any attempt at anything so presumptuous as to describe the religious character of any profession.

We have no means of obtaining the evidence necessary to support so serious and

difficult a conclusion. The great bulk of our profession are general practitioners; and in forming opinions in regard to any class of men, we naturally look to the greatest number. So far as our own experience has gone, we cannot find the slightest ground for the degrading imputation. Like all other medical men, their labours are incessant, the hours of recreation few and far between. In their requisitions on their time, the public regard neither night nor day nor the Sabbath, when they require attention. Then, if we look to conduct as no unreasonable test of religion, we may, like all other professions, have blots. We have, in all grades, no doubt, it may be, our "fee-hunters and our long-billed practitioners; but whether we regard the physician, surgeon, or general practitioner, we verily believe that there are no men in the kingdom who, as a body, conduct themselves more honourably, none who are less mercenary, who, in relation to their position, are less affluent—no bad test—or who do one-tenth of the work which they do, without any remuneration whatever.

With regard to the alleged absence from public worship, there may be (however explicable) some ground for the remark, and especially as no profession shows, in the general respectability of their conduct, a more ready and respectful acquiescence in the established usages of mankind.

But let the question be fairly stated. How many medical men can go to church every Sunday, and to the same church, without a compromise of a paramount duty? We are ready to concede, that the necessities which professional calls imperatively impose on so many occasions, may have a tendency to form habits when impediments are less pressing; but is it not rather the exactions of the public, than the choice of the profession, which imposes the necessity? How many of the public would be satisfied, if they wished to see a professional man on any pressing occasion, and were told that he could not be seen for a couple of hours, as he was going to church?

Highly as we venerate the benign and beautiful ordinance of the Sabbath, important as we

think it, on all accounts that it should be observed with reverence and gratitude ; still we should hesitate before we regarded the single act of attendance or absence on public worship, a safe or charitable exposition of any man's religious stability. We, therefore, as far as in us lies, repudiate the charge ; we regard it as groundless ; and think that, as no profession gives a more constant opportunity of constant awakening and keeping alive the best sympathies of our nature, so no profession can be more calculated to impress the fragile nature of the body, as contrasted with the immortal spirit which inhabits it, or the constant presence of that Power by whose laws they are governed. But groundless as we think the charge, we must contend that the apathy of the Council of the College, at the time Mr. Lawrence delivered the Lectures in question, was a serious neglect of duty. In the Lectures in question, Mr. Lawrence spoke of the Old Testament in a tone which must, we think, be regarded as irrelevant to, or at least unnecessary, in a course of Lectures on Comparative Anatomy.

We hold no sympathy with that sort of persecution with which several well-intentioned people visited the book ; but we must always regard the Council of the time as having been neglectful of their duty. Lectures on Comparative Anatomy do not render it necessary to impugn the historical correctness, or the inspired character of the Old Testament. What answer could private individuals make, or with what influence could they oppose the prejudices of the public in relation to the religious securities afforded by them in whom they confide ; when they saw a young man allowed to introduce matter in lectures, given to an audience composed of the most aged and eminent of the profession, as well as of many of those who were just commencing their studies, delivered, too, at the chartered College of the profession ; matter, which was not only not at all necessary to the most ample exposition of the subject, but which, as we have said, only alluded to the Old Testament in a manner calculated to weaken its authority as an historical document, and to impugn its inspired character ?

Surely there was no more certain mode of giving an *ex cathedra* sanction to the unfavourable impressions of the public; impressions which tend to tarnish the lustre of a profession, which founds its claims to respect on its kindly ministrations and unquestioned utility, and to arm a vulgar and unfounded prejudice with all the influence of Collegiate recognition. If, indeed, the College had desired to support the alleged favourable tendency of Mr. Abernethy's views or the alleged opposite bearings of those to which he was opposed, they could hardly have done better than to have allowed of the irrelevant matter in question. But we have done. It is no part of our business to quote passages, or further to renew discussions long since passed away, than is necessary for our proper objects. But when we consider on how many points Abernethy must have been hurt, the very difficult and perplexing position in which he was placed, we cannot too much admire the very measured tone he adopted throughout; or the evidently wounded feeling, but still dignified yet simple statement of the published

Postscript to his Lectures; and though there had been no subsequent exemplification of his forgiving temper—which was not the case—we should still have felt obliged to regard the whole affair as indicative of great goodness of heart; and when all the circumstances of disappointment and vexation are duly weighed, of almost unexampled moderation.

It is just to Mr. Lawrence to observe that, some few years after this, the Governors of Bethlem Hospital, on the annual (and usually formal) election of the surgeon, an office held by Mr. Lawrence, threw the appointment open to competition; on which occasion Mr. Lawrence published a letter expressing regret, in general terms, as to certain passages in the Lectures in question, and his determination not to publish any more on similar subjects. The coincidence of this letter with the threatened tenure of office, of course gave rise to the usual remarks; but, if a man says he is sorry for a thing, perhaps it is better not to scan motives too closely. Mankind stand too much in need of what

Burns suggests, and with which we close this not very agreeable subject :

- “ Then gently scan your brother man,
- “ Still gentler sister woman ;
- “ Though they may gang a kennin wrang,
- “ To step aside is human.”

CHAPTER IV.

“And though they prove not they confirm the cause,
When what is taught agrees with Nature’s laws.”

DRYDEN’S RELIG. LAICI.

PREFATORY REMARKS.

IN endeavouring to give some idea of Abernethy’s manner in more sustained compositions, we have made some selections from the Lectures he delivered at the College of Surgeons. Without any pretensions to a critically faultless style, there always seemed to us to be a peculiar simplicity combined with a broad and comprehensive range of thought. Sometimes, too, he has almost a “*curiosa felicitas*” in the tone of his expressions, though this was more remarkable, we think, when he felt more free; that is, in his unrivalled teaching at the Hospital, of which we

shall endeavour to give a more particular account. As we have before remarked, it is impossible to do full justice to Abernethy unless we were to publish his works with a running commentary, and we fear that in the selections we offer we have incurred a responsibility which we shall not properly fulfil. To convey the full, the suggestive merit of even some of the following passages, it would be necessary to state carefully the relation they bear to the state of science, both chemical and physiological, at the time they were written, and the present.

The interest of the Lectures is so evenly distributed through the whole, that selection is very difficult; and being obliged to consider our limits, we have, in the absence of a better guide, selected the passages at random, as suggested by our own impressions of them. We therefore can only earnestly recommend the perusal of the Lectures themselves as equally entertaining and instructive to the general as well as the professional reader. The varied expression and manner, and his fine intellectual countenance, by which he imparted so much interest to his delivery on every subject he touched, will be

considered in connection with his success in the art of lecturing, and to which these somewhat formal specimens may serve as an introduction.

THE APPARENT UNIVERSAL DISTRIBUTION OF SOME POWERFUL FORCE LIKE ELECTRICITY, MAGNETISM, &c.

“When, therefore, we perceive in the universe at large, a cause of rapid and powerful motions of masses of inert matter, may we not naturally conclude that the inert molecules of vegetable and animal matter may be made to move in a similar manner by a similar cause?”

REPUDIATION OF AN OFTEN ALLEGED OPINION.

“It is not meant that electricity is life. There are strong analogies between electricity and magnetism, and yet I do not know that any one has been hardy enough to assert their absolute identity.* I only mean to prove that

* Oersted's experiments, which by some are regarded as identifying these powers, occurred in 1820, four or five years after the delivery of this Lecture.

“ Mr. Hunter’s theory is verifiable, by showing
“ that a subtile substance of a quickly, power-
“ fully mobile nature seems to pervade every-
“ thing, and appears to be the life of the world ;
“ and therefore it is probable that a similar
“ substance pervades organized bodies, and
“ produces* similar effects in them.

“ The opinions which, in former times were
“ a justifiable hypothesis, seem to me now to
“ be converted into a rational theory.”*

IN RELATION TO MICROSCOPIC OBSERVATION.

“ This general and imperfect sketch of the
“ anatomy of the nervous system relates only to
“ what may be discovered by our unassisted
“ sight. If, by means of the microscope, we
“ endeavour to observe the ultimate nervous
“ fibres, persons in general are as much at a
“ loss as when, by the same means, they at-
“ tempt to trace the ultimate muscular fibres.” †

* Anatom. Lect. I, p. 51.

† Anatom. Lect. II, p. 62.

ILLUSTRATION OF MOTION NOT NECESSARILY IMPLYING
SENSATION.

“Assuredly, motion does not necessarily
“imply sensation; it takes place where no
“one ever yet imagined there could be sensa-
“tion. If I put on the table a basin containing
“a saturated solution of salt, and threw into
“it a single crystal, the act of crystallization
“would begin from the point touched, and
“rapidly and regularly pervade the liquor till
“it assumed a solid form. Yet I know I should
“incur your ridicule if I suggested the idea
“that the stimulus of salt had primarily excited
“the action, or that its extension was the effect
“of continuous sympathy. If, also, I threw a
“spark amongst gunpowder, what would you
“think were I to represent the explosion as a
“struggle resentful of injury, or the noise as
“the clamorous expression of pain?”*

* Anatom. Lect. II, p. 84.

DIFFERENT NERVOUS SYSTEMS VARIOUSLY AFFECTED BY
SIMILAR IMPRESSIONS.

“Thus the odour of a cat, or the effluvia of
“mutton, the one imperceptible, the other
“grateful to the generality of persons, has
“caused individuals to fall on the ground as
“though bereaved of life, or to have their
“whole frame agitated by convulsions. Sub-
“stances which induce disease in one person or
“animal, do not induce disease in others.”*

IMPORTANCE OF OPINIONS.

“Thinking being inevitable, we ought, as
“I said, to be solicitous to think correctly.
“Opinions are equally the natural result of
“thought, and the cause of conduct. If errors
“of thought terminated in opinions, they would
“be of less consequence ; but a slight deviation
“from the line of rectitude in thought, may

* Anatom. Lect. II, p. 85.

“ lead to a most distant and disastrous aberration from that line in action. I own I cannot readily believe any one who tells me he has formed no opinion on subjects which must have engaged and interested his attention. Persons both of sceptical and credulous characters form opinions, and we have in general some principal opinion, to which we connect the rest, and to which we make them subservient, and this has a great influence on all our conduct. Doubt and uncertainty are so fatiguing to the human mind, by keeping it in continual action, that it will and must rest somewhere; and if so, our inquiry ought to be where it may rest most securely and comfortably to itself, and with most advantage to others.

“ In the uncertainty of opinions, wisdom would counsel us to adopt those which have a tendency to produce beneficial actions.”

INDEPENDENCE OF MIND ON LIFE AS ARISING OUT OF
THE IDEA THAT LIFE WAS SUPERADDED TO ORGANIZA-
TION—HIS DISPOSITION TO ALLEGORY.

“ If I may be allowed to express myself
“ allegorically with regard to our intellectual
“ operations, I would say that the mind chooses
“ for itself some little spot or district, where it
“ erects a dwelling, which it furnishes and
“ decorates with the various materials it collects.
“ Of many apartments contained in it, there
“ is one to which it is most partial, where it
“ chiefly reposes, and where it sometimes in-
“ dulges its visionary fancies. At the same
“ time, it employs itself in cultivating the sur-
“ rounding grounds, raising little articles for
“ intellectual traffic with its neighbours, or
“ perhaps some produce worthy to be deposited
“ amongst the general stores of human know-
“ ledge. Thus my mind rests at peace in
“ thinking on the subject of life, as it has
“ been taught by Mr. Hunter, and I am
“ visionary enough to imagine that if these
“ opinions should become so established as to

“be generally admitted by philosophers, that if
“they once saw reason to believe that life was
“something of an invisible and active nature
“*superadded* to organization, they would then
“see equal reason to believe that mind might
“be superadded to life, as life is to structure.
“They would then, indeed, still further perceive
“how mind and matter might reciprocally ope-
“rate on each other by means of an intervening
“substance. Thus, even, would physiological
“researches enforce the belief which I say is
“natural to man; that in addition to his
“bodily frame, he possesses a sensitive, intel-
“ligent, and *independent* mind; an opinion,
“which tends in an eminent degree to produce
“virtuous, honourable, and useful actions.”*

ATTRACTIONS OF PHYSIOLOGY—THE NECESSITY OF EX-
AMINING BOTH HEALTH AND DISEASE A VERY IMPORT-
ANT POINT JUST NOW, AS TESTING THE VALIDITY OF
CERTAIN VIEWS OF LIEBIG AND OTHERS.

“No study can surely be so interesting as

* Anatom. Lect. II, p. 92.

“ Physiology. Whilst other sciences carry us
“ abroad in search of objects, in this we are
“ engaged at home, and on concerns highly
“ important to us, in inquiring into the means
“ by which ‘ we live and move and have our
“ being.’ To those, however, engaged in the
“ practice of Medicine, the study of Physiology
“ is indispensable, for it is evident that the
“ nature of the disordered actions of parts or
“ organs can never be understood or judiciously
“ counteracted, unless the nature of their healthy
“ actions be previously known.

“ The study of Physiology, however, not
“ only requires that we should investigate the
“ nature of the various vital processes carried
“ on in our own bodies, but also that we should
“ compare them with similar processes in all
“ the varieties of living beings; not only that
“ we should consider them in a state of natural
“ and healthy action, but also under all the
“ varying circumstances of disorder and disease.
“ Few, indeed, have studied Physiology thus
“ extensively, and none in an equal degree with
“ Mr. Hunter. Whoever attentively peruses

“his writings, must, I think, perceive that he
“draws his crowds of facts from such different
“and remote sources, as to make it extremely
“difficult to assemble and arrange them.”*

OF DISORDER AND DISEASE.

“Disorder, which is the effect of faulty
“actions of *nerves*, induces disease, which is
“the consequence of faulty actions of the
“*vessels*. There are some who find it diffi-
“cult to understand how similar swellings or
“ulcers may form in various parts of the body
“in consequence of general nervous disorder,
“and are all curable by appeasing and removing
“such general disorder. The fact is indisput-
“able. Such persons are not so much surprized
“that general nervous disorder should produce
“local effects in the nervous and muscular
“systems, yet they cannot so well understand
“how it should locally affect the vascular sys-
“tem. To me there appears nothing wonder-

* *Physiol. Lect. 1, p. 3. 1817.*

“ful in such events, for the local affection is
“primarily nervous, and the vascular actions
“are consequent. Yet it must indeed be
“granted that there may be other circumstances
“leading to the peculiarities of local diseases,
“with which, at present, we are unacquainted.
“Disorder excites to disease, and when *im-*
“*portant organs* become in a degree diseased,
“they will still perform their functions mode-
“rately well *if disorder* be relieved, which
“*ought to be the Alpha and Omega of medi-*
“*cal attention.*”*

As we have seen in the early part of our narrative, he was one of the first to insist on the importance of Comparative Anatomy and Physiology, and, as we shall have to relate, most active in securing what has proved so greatly influential to its progress in this country (the appointment of Professor Owen). Yet he modestly ignores any positive pretensions which

* Introd. Lect. p. 117. 1815.

might be imputed to him from his endeavour to illustrate a Museum dealing so largely with Comparative Anatomy.

“Gratitude to the former of the Museum, and also to the donors of it, equally demand that its value and excellency should be publicly acknowledged and displayed, which consideration has goaded me on to undertake and imperfectly to execute a task for which I feel myself not properly qualified.”

Here follows what is very candid in Abernethy and honourable to Mr. Clift, who had very many debtors who were less communicative.

“I cordially acknowledge that I have little acquaintance with the subject except what I derived from looking over the preparations in the Museum, from reading Professor

“Cuvier’s Lectures, and from the frank and
“friendly communications of our highly praise-
“worthy conservator, Mr. Clift. Permit me
“to say, gentlemen, though many know it
“already, that Mr. Clift resided with Mr.
“Hunter, and was taught by him to exhibit
“anatomical facts in preparations, that he does
“credit to his excellent instructor, that he feels
“the same interest and zeal that his patron did
“for the improvement of this department of
“science, and that he possesses the same can-
“dour and simplicity of character.”*

OF DEEP AND SUPERFICIAL THINKING.

“I now beg leave to add that there are many
“who think clearly, who do not think deeply ;
“and they have greatly the advantage in ex-
“pressing themselves, for their thoughts are
“generally simple and easy of apprehension.
“Opinions immediately deduced from any
“series or assemblage of facts may be called

* *Physiol. Lect. i, p. 14.*

“primary opinions, and they become types and
 “representatives of the facts from which they
 “are formed, and like the facts themselves
 “admit of assortment, comparison, and in-
 “fluence, so that from them we deduce ulterior
 “opinions, till at length, by a kind of intellec-
 “tual calculation, we obtain some general total,
 “which, in like manner, becomes the represen-
 “tative and co-efficient of all our knowledge,
 “with relation to the subject examined and
 “considered.”*

“In proportion to the pains we have taken
 “in this algebraical process of the mind, and
 “our assurance of its correctness, so do we
 “contemplate the conclusion or consummation
 “of our labours with satisfaction.”

CHARACTERISTIC OF HIS INCLINATION TO THE LAW.

“Gentlemen (of the jury), I trust I can prove
 “to your perfect conviction, by ample and incon-
 “trovertible evidence, that my client (John Hunter)

* *Physiol. Lect. 1, p. 26.*

“died seized and possessed of very considerable
 “literary property, the hard-earned gainings of
 “great talent and unparalleled industry. It is
 “not, however, for the property that I plead,
 “because already that is secured ; it is fenced in ;
 “land-marks are set up ; it is registered in public
 “documents. I plead only for the restitution of a
 “great and accumulated income of reputation de-
 “rivable from that property, which, I trust, you
 “will perceive to be justly due, and will conse-
 “quently award to my client, and his country.”*

OF MR. HUNTER—PROGRESS OF HIS MIND, &c.

“Believing that no man will labour in the
 “strenuous and unremitting manner that Mr.
 “Hunter did, and to the detriment of his own
 “private interest, without some strong incen-
 “tive ; I have supposed that at an early period
 “he conceived those notions of life which were
 “confirmed by his future inquiries and experi-
 “ments. He began his observations on the

* *Physiol. Lect. 1, p. 16.*

“incubated egg, in the year 1755, which must
“either have suggested or corroborated all his
“opinions with regard to the cause of the vital
“phenomena. He perceived that, however
“different in form and faculty, every creature
“was nevertheless allied to himself because it
“was a living being, and therefore he became
“solicitous to inquire how the vital processes
“were carried on in all the varieties of animal
“and even vegetable existence.”

OF GENIUS AND JUDGMENT.

“In the progress of science, genius with
“light and airy steps often far precedes judg-
“ment which proceeds slowly, and either finds
“or forms a road along which all may proceed
“with facility and security; but the *direction*
“of the course of judgment is often suggested,
“and its actions are excited and accelerated by
“the invocations of preceding genius.”*

* Physiol. Lect. I, p. 19.

REITERATION OF THE DENIAL THAT HE IDENTIFIED
LIFE WITH ELECTRICITY.

“As Sir H. Davy’s experiments fully prove
“that electricity may be superadded to, and
“that it enters into the composition of all those
“substances we call matter, I felt satisfied with
“the establishment of the philosophy of Mr.
“Hunter’s views, nor thought it necessary to
“proceed further, but merely added: ‘It is not
“meant to be affirmed that electricity is life.’
“I only mean to argue in favour of Mr.
“Hunter’s theory by showing that a subtile
“substance of a quickly and powerfully mobile
“nature seems to pervade everything, and
“appears to be the life of the world; and that
“therefore it is probable a similar substance
“pervades organized bodies, and is the life of
“these bodies. I am concerned, yet obliged to
“detain you by this recapitulation, because my
“meaning has been either misunderstood or
“misrepresented.”*

* *Physiol. Lect. I, p. 26.*

CHEMISTRY OF LIFE.

“ He (Mr. Hunter) told us that life was a
“ great chemist, and, even in a seemingly
“ quiescent state, had the power of resisting
“ the operations of external chemical agency,
“ and thereby preventing the decomposition of
“ those bodies in which it resided. Thus seeds
“ may lie buried far beneath the surface of the
“ earth for a great length of time without decay-
“ ing, but being thrown up they vegetate. Mr.
“ Hunter showed us that this chemist “ Life,”
“ had the power of regulating the temperature
“ of the substances in which it resides.”*

INTERESTING ; ALSO SIGNIFICANT IN REGARD TO WHAT
ARE PROBABLY THE REAL SOURCES OF ANIMAL HEAT,
AND IN RELATION TO THE LUNGS, WHICH WE HAVE
CONTENDED ARE REFRIGERATING AND NOT HEATING
ORGANS.

“ The progress of science since Mr. Hunter’s
“ time has wonderfully manifested that the

* *Physiol. Lect. I, p. 27.*

“ beam, when dissected by a prism, is not only
“ separable into seven calorific rays of different
“ refrangibility, producing the iridescent spec-
“ trum, but also into calorific rays refracted in
“ the greatest degree or intensity beyond the
“ red colour, and into rays not calorific, re-
“ fracted, in like manner, to the opposite side
“ of the spectrum beyond the violet colour ;
“ and that the calorific and uncalorific rays
“ produce effects similar to those occasioned by
“ the two kinds of electricity ; and thus afforded
“ additional reasons for believing that subtile
“ mobile substances do enter into the compo-
“ sition of all those bodies which the sun
“ illumines, or its beams can penetrate.

“ Late observations induce the belief that
“ even light may be incorporated in a latent
“ state with animal substances, and afterwards
“ elicited by a kind of spontaneous separation
“ by vital actions, or by causes that seem to
“ act mechanically on the substance in which it
“ inheres. All the late discoveries in science
“ seem to realize the speculations of ancient
“ philosophers, and show that all the changes

“ and motions which occur in surrounding
“ bodies, as well as those in which we live, are the
“ effect of subtile and invisible principles exist-
“ ing in them, or acting on them. Mr. Ellis,
“ who, with such great industry and intelli-
“ gence, has collated all the scattered evidences
“ relative to the production of heat in living
“ bodies, and added so much to the collected
“ knowledge, seems to think that all the varia-
“ tions of temperature in them may be ac-
“ counted for by known chemical processes.

“ Here, however, I must observe, that Mr.
“ Hunter’s opinion of life having the power of
“ regulating temperature was deduced, not only
“ from his own experiments, related in the
“ ‘Philosophical Transactions,’ but also from
“ observing that, in certain *affections of the*
“ *stomach, the heat of the body is subject to*
“ *great vicissitudes, whilst respiration and*
“ *circulation remain unaltered*; and also that
“ parts of the body are subject to similar varia-
“ tions, which appear inexplicable upon any
“ other supposition than that of *local nervous*
“ *excitement*, or torpor, or some similar affec-

“ tions of the vital powers of the part which
 “ undergoes such transitions.”*

ALLEGED TENDENCIES OF A BELIEF ON THE INDE-
 PENDENT NATURE OF MIND.

“ It is equally apparent that the belief of
 “ the distinct and independent nature of mind
 “ incites us to act rightly from principle; to
 “ relieve distress, to repel aggression, and defend
 “ those who are incapable of protecting them-
 “ selves; to practise and extol whatever is
 “ virtuous, excellent, and honourable; to shun
 “ and condemn whatever is vicious and base,
 “ regardless also of our own personal feelings
 “ and interests when put in competition with
 “ our duty.”†

OF PHRENOLOGY.

“ There is nothing in the assertions of Drs.
 “ Gall and Spurzheim contradictory to the results

* *Physiol. Lect.* 1, p. 37.

† *Physiol. Lect.* 1, p. 51.

“ of general observation and experience. It is
“ admitted that the superior intellectual faculties
“ can and ought to control the inferior pro-
“ pensities. It is admitted that we possess
“ organs, which, nevertheless, may be inactive
“ from general torpor or want of education.
“ General observation and experience proclaim
“ that susceptibility is the chief incentive to
“ action, that it is the source of genius ; and that
“ the character of the man greatly depends on
“ his education and habits. We educate our
“ faculties ; what is at first accomplished with
“ difficulty, by repetition is easily performed and
“ becomes more perfect and established by habit.
“ Trains of perceptions and thoughts also
“ become firmly concentrated, and occur in suc-
“ cession. Even our feelings undergo the same
“ kind of education and establishment. Casual
“ feelings of goodwill by repetition strengthen,
“ and produce lasting friendships ; whilst trivial
“ sensations of disgust, in like manner, may oc-
“ casion inveterate hatred.”

ON THE SAME.

“ Should the result of our general inquiries,
“ or attention to the subjects proposed to us by
“ Drs. Gall and Spurzheim, induce us to believe
“ that the peculiarities of our feelings and facul-
“ ties were the effects of variety of excitement,
“ transmitted through a diversity of organiza-
“ tion, they would tend to produce mutual for-
“ bearance and toleration. We should perceive
“ how nearly impossible it must be that any
“ persons should think and feel exactly alike
“ upon any subject. We should not arrogantly
“ pride ourselves on our own virtue and know-
“ ledge, nor condemn the errors and weakness
“ of others, since they may depend upon causes
“ which we can neither produce nor readily coun-
“ teract. The path of virtue is plain and direct,
“ and its object distinctly before us; so that no
“ one can miss either, who has resolution enough
“ never to lose sight of them, by adverting to
“ advantages and allurements with which he
“ may be presented on the one hand, or the

“menacings with which he may be assailed on
“the other. Yet no one, judging from his own
“feelings and powers, can be aware of the kind
“and degree of temptation or terror, or the
“seeming incapacity to resist them, which
“may have induced others to deviate. Now,
“though from the foregoing considerations, I
“am pleased with the speculations of Drs. Gall
“and Spurzheim, I am quite incompetent to
“give any opinion as to the probability of what
“they have suggested; because I see no mode
“by which we can with propriety admit or
“reject their assertions, except by pursuing the
“same course of investigations which they
“themselves have followed; a task of great
“labour and difficulty, and one which, for
“various reasons, I should feel great repugnance
“to undertake.”*

Abernethy used to like very well to talk with Spurzheim, who resided for some time in this country. One day, Abernethy, half-seriously,

* *Physiol. Lect.* III, p. 99.

half-humorously said to Spurzheim: "Well, Doctor, where do you place the organ of common sense?" Spurzheim's reply certainly sustained the coincidence of phrenological deductions with those of experience. "There is no organ," said he, "for common sense, but it depends on the equilibrium of the other organs."

THEOLOGICAL APPLICATION OF ANATOMICAL FACTS.

"Therefore, from this least interesting part of anatomy, we derive the strongest conviction of there being design and contrivance in the construction of animals. Equal evidences of design and contrivance and of adaptation of means to ends may be observed in the construction of the frame-work, as I may call it, of other animals, as in that of man, which subject seems to me very happily displayed in Professor Cuvier's Lectures."*

"It was, however, the comparing the mechanism of the hand and foot that led Galen, who

* *Physiol. Lect.* III, p. 151.

“ they say was a sceptic in his youth, to the
“ public declaration of his opinion that intelli-
“ gence must have operated in ordaining the
“ laws by which living beings are constructed.
“ That Galen was a man of a very superior
“ intellect could be readily proved were it
“ necessary. I have often known the passage I
“ allude to made a subject of reference, but not
“ of quotation, and therefore I recite it on the
“ present occasion, and particularly because it
“ shows that Galen was not in the least degree
“ tinctured with superstition. ‘ In explaining
“ ‘ these things,’ he says, ‘ I esteem myself as
“ ‘ composing a solemn hymn to the great Archi-
“ ‘ tect of our bodily frame, in which I think
“ ‘ there is more true piety than in sacrificing
“ ‘ whole hecatombs of oxen or in burning the
“ ‘ most costly perfumes ; for first I endeavour
“ ‘ from His works to know Him myself, and
“ ‘ afterwards by the same means to show Him
“ ‘ to others, to inform them how great is His
“ ‘ wisdom, goodness and power.’ ”*

* *Physiol. Lect. III, p. 152.*

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER OF LIVING BODIES.

“Those bodies which we call living are chiefly
“characterized by their powers of converting sur-
“rounding substances into their own nature, of
“building up the structure of their own bodies,
“and repairing the injuries they may accidentally
“sustain.”*

IN REPUDIATION OF CRUELTY AND EXPERIMENTS ON
ANIMALS.

Very important in our view. The objection was very new at that time, and has made very little way yet.* We have referred to this subject in the first volume. Considering the period of these Lectures (nearly forty years ago), Abernethy's objections, though cautious, are very sound, and for him very positive. We know that he felt still more strongly.

“Mr. Hunter, whom I should not have
“believed to be very scrupulous about inflicting

* *Physiol. Lect.* iv, p. 155.

“sufferings upon animals, nevertheless censures
“Spalanzani for the unmeaning repetition of
“similar experiments. Having resolved pub-
“licly to express my own opinion with respect
“to this subject, I choose the present opportu-
“nity to do it, because I believe Spalanzani to
“have been one of those who have tortured
“and destroyed animals in vain. I do not
“perceive that in the two principal subjects
“which he sought to elucidate, he has added
“any important fact to our stock of knowledge;
“besides, some of his experiments are of a
“nature that a good man would have blushed
“to think of, and a wise man ashamed to
“publish, for they prove no fact requiring to
“be proved, and only show that the aforesaid
“Abbé was a filthy-minded fellow.”

ON THE SAME.

“The design of experiments is to interro-
“gate nature; and surely the inquirer ought
“to make himself acquainted with the lan-

“ gauge of nature, and take care to propose
“ pertinent questions. He ought further to
“ consider the probable kind of replies that
“ may be made to his inquiries, and the in-
“ ferences that he may be warranted in
“ drawing from different responses, so as to be
“ able to determine whether, by the commis-
“ sion of cruelty, he is likely to obtain adequate
“ instruction. Indeed, before we make experi-
“ ments on sensitive beings, we ought further
“ to consider whether the information we seek
“ may not be attainable by other means. I
“ am aware of the advantages which have
“ been derived from such experiments when
“ made by persons of talent, and who have
“ properly prepared themselves, but I know
“ that these experiments tend to harden the
“ feelings which often lead to the inconsiderate
“ performance of them.

“ Surely we should endeavour to foster and
“ not stifle benevolence, the best sentiment of
“ our nature, that which is productive of the
“ greatest gratification both to its professor and
“ to others. *Considering the professors in this*

“ *place as the organs of the Court of the Col-*
“ *lege*, addressing its members, I feel that I
“ act as becomes a senior of this institution,
“ whilst admitting the propriety of the practice
“ under the foregoing restrictions, I, at the
“ same time, express an earnest hope that the
“ character of an English surgeon may never
“ be tarnished by the commission of incon-
“ siderate or unnecessary cruelty.”*

A VERY EARLY EXCELLENCE OF ABERNETHY: EXCEED-
INGLY NECESSARY AT ONE TIME IN RELATION TO
THE ERRONEOUS NOTIONS ON WHICH ANATOMICAL
INVESTIGATIONS WERE CONDUCTED ; ADVANCING
SCIENCE HAS FULLY CONFIRMED THE JUSTICE AND
GOOD SENSE OF HIS REMARKS.

“ To me, however, who confide more in the
“ eye of reason than in that of sense, and
“ would rather form opinions from analogy
“ than from the imperfect evidence of sight,
“ it seems too hasty an inference to conclude
“ that, in the minute animals, there are no

* *Physiol. Lect. iv, p. 164.*

“ vessels nor other organization because we
“ cannot see them, or that polypes are actually
“ devoid of vessels, and merely of the structure
“ described, because we can discern no other.
“ Were it, however, really so, such facts would
“ then only show with how little and with
“ what various organization life could accom-
“ plish its principal functions of assimilation,
“ formation and multiplication. Who has seen
“ the multitudinous distribution of absorbing
“ vessels, and all the other organization, which
“ doubtless exists in the vitreous humour of
“ the eye, than which no glass ever appeared
“ more transparent or more seemingly inor-
“ ganic? How strange is it that anatomists,
“ above all other members of the community
“ of science should hesitate to admit the exist-
“ ence of what they cannot discern, since they,
“ more than all the rest, have such constant
“ assurance of the imperfection and fallibility
“ of sight?”*

* *Physiol. Lect. v, p. 203.*

REITERATION OF AN IMPORTANT AXIOM, QUITE NECESSARY AT THIS TIME TO THE CHEMICAL PHYSIOLOGISTS.

“ Our physiological theories should be adequate to account for all the vital phenomena both in health *and disorder*, or they can never be maintained as good theories.”*

OF RESPIRATION. CAUTIOUS REASONING. HAD ALL REASONED THUS, WE MIGHT HAVE ESCAPED MUCH UNSOUND THEORIZING ON THIS IMPORTANT PROCESS.

“ Chemists have considered the change as contributory to the production of animal heat, which opinion may, indeed, be true, though the manner in which it produces such an effect has not, as yet, been explained. Mr. Hunter, who believed that life had the power of regulating temperature, *independently of* respiration, says nothing of that process as directly contributing to such an effect. He

* *Physiol. Lect. v, p. 229.*

“ says: ‘Breathing seems to render life to the
“ blood, and the blood conveys it to every
“ part of the body,’ yet he believes the blood
“ derives its vitality also from the food. I
“ am at a loss to know what chemists now
“ think respecting heat, whether they consider
“ it to be a distinct species of matter, or mere
“ motion and vibration. Among the curious
“ revolutions which this age has produced,
“ those of chemical opinions have a fair claim
“ to distinction. To show which, I may add,
“ that a lady,* on her first marriage, was
“ wedded to that scientific champion who first
“ overthrew phlogiston, and established, in its
“ stead, the empire of caloric; and after his
“ decease, on her second nuptials, was united
“ to the man who vainly supposed he had sub-
“ verted the rule of caloric and restored the
“ ancient but long-banished dynasty of motion
“ and vibration. In this state of perplexity, I
“ cannot, with prudence or probable security,
“ advance one step further than Mr. Hunter

* Madame Lavoisier, whose celebrated husband was guillotined, afterwards married Count Rumford.

“ has led me. I must believe respiration to be
“ essential to life, and that life has the power,
“ by its actions, of maintaining and regulating
“ temperature.”*

CHARACTERISTIC, BOTH AS TO ILLUSTRATION AND MORAL
BEARING.

“ Those of the medical profession must
“ readily accord with the remark of Shakes-
“ peare, that such affections which may well
“ indeed be called ‘master passions,’ sway us
“ to their mood in what we like or loathe. For
“ we well know that our patients and ourselves,
“ from disturbance of the nervous functions of
“ the digestive organs, producing such affections
“ of the brain, may become irritable, petulant,
“ and violent about trifles, or oppressed, morose,
“ and desponding. Permit me, however, to add
“ that those of the medical profession must
“ be equally apprized that when the functions of
“ the mind are not disturbed by such affections, it

* *Physiol. Lect.* v, p. 237.

“displays great energy of thought, and evidence
“of established character, even in death. Have
“we not lately heard that the last words of
“Nelson were: ‘Tell Collingwood to bring the
“fleet to an anchor?’ Shakespeare has also
“represented Mercutio continuing to jest, though
“he was mortally wounded; the expiring
“Hotspur thinking of nothing but honour,
“and the dying Falstaff cracking his jokes on
“Bardolph’s nose. I request you to excuse
“this digression, which I have been induced to
“make, from perceiving that if such facts were
“duly attended to, they would prompt us to a
“more liberal allowance for each other’s conduct
“under certain circumstances, than we are
“accustomed to do; and also incite us to the
“more active and constant performance of the
“great business of human life, the education of
“the mind, for, according to its knowledge and
“dispositions, do we possess the ability of
“contributing to our own welfare and comfort,
“and that of others.”

CHAPTER V.

ABERNETHY AS A TEACHER.

“Trace Science, then, with modesty thy guide,
First strip off all her equipage of pride,
Deduct what is but vanity or dress,
Or learning’s luxury or idleness,
Or tricks, to show the stretch of human brain
Mere curious pleasure or ingenious pain.”

LECTURING after a fashion is easy enough; *teaching* is a very different affair. The one requires little more than good information, some confidence, and a *copia verborum*; the other establishes several additional requisitions. These requisitions, when rendered comparatively easy by nature, are seldom perfectly matured without art and some careful study. The transmission of ideas from one mind to another, in a simple

unequivocal form, is not always easy; but in teaching, the object is not merely to convey the idea, but to give a lively and lasting impression; something that should not merely cause the retention of the image, but in such connection as to excite another process, "thought."

There was no peculiarity in Abernethy more striking than the power he possessed of communicating his ideas, and of sustaining the interest of the subject on which he spoke. For this there is no doubt he was greatly indebted to natural talent, but it is equally clear that he had cultivated it with much care. His ability as a lecturer was, we think, unique. We never saw his like before: we hardly dare hope we shall again.

There is no doubt that a great part of his success depended on a facility of giving that variety of expression, and that versatility of manner, which falls within the province of what we must call dramatic; but then it was of the very highest description, in that it was perfectly natural. It was of that kind that we sometimes find in an actor, and which conveys

the impression that he is speaking his own sentiments rather than those of the author. It is a species of talent which dies with its possessor, and cannot we think be conveyed by description. Still there were many things in Abernethy that were observable, and such as could hardly have been acquired without study.

If we examine any lecturer's style, and ask ourselves what is his fault, we shall find very few in whom we cannot detect one or more. When we do this, and then reflect on Abernethy, we are astonished to find how many he avoided. We shall endeavour to make this as intelligible as we can, by citing some of the features which our attention to different lecturers have suggested.

Simplicity has struck us as a feature in lectures which, in some sense or other, is very commonly defective. Simplicity appears so important, that perhaps, by not a very illegitimate extension of its meaning, it might be made to include almost all the requisitions of this mode of teaching. Let us think of it in relation to language and illustration. In all

sciences the *facts* are simple, the laws are yet *more so*; increasing knowledge tends to impress on us an ever-increasing and comprehensive simplicity. In explaining simple things, no doubt language should be simple too. If we employ language unnecessarily technical, we use symbols to which the learner is unaccustomed. He has not to learn the facts only, but he has the additional labour of something allied to learning it in a foreign language. The unnecessary use of technicalities should surely be avoided. Abernethy was obliged to use them because there were often no other terms, but he always avoided any needless multiplication of them. When they were difficult or objectionable, he tried some manœuvre to lighten the repulsiveness of them.

There are many muscles in the neck with long names, and which are generally given with important parts of surgical anatomy. Here he used to chat a little; he called them the little muscles with the long names; but he would add, that after all, they were the best

named muscles in the body, because their names expressed their attachments. This gave him an excuse for referring to what he had just described, in the form of a narrative, rather than a dry repetition. Then, with regard to one muscle, that he wished particularly to impress, the name of which was longer than any of the others, he used to point it out as a striking feature in all statues; and then, repeating its attachments, and pointing to the sites which they occupied, say it was impossible to do so without having the image of the muscle before us.

In other parts of the Lectures, he would accompany the technical name by the popular one. Thus he would speak of the pancreas, or sweetbread; cartilage, or gristle; few people are aware how many difficulties are smoothed by such simple manœuvres. Nothing interests people so much as giving anything *positive*. We think it not improbable that many a man has heard a lecture, in which animals have been described, with whose habits he had been perfectly familiar; without

having recognized his familiar acquaintances in the disguise afforded by a voluminous Greek compound. Abernethy seemed always to lecture, not so much as if he was telling us what he *knew*, as that which we did *not* know. There was an absence of all display of any kind whatever.

•To hear some lecturers, one would almost think that they adopted the definition of language, which is reported of Talleyrand, that it was intended to conceal our ideas. Some make simple things very much otherwise, by the mode of explaining them. This reminds us of a very worthy country clergyman in the west of England, who, happening to illustrate something in his sermon by reference to the qualities of pitch, thought he should help his rustic congregation by enlarging a little on the qualities of that mineral. He accordingly commenced by saying, "Now, dear brethren, pitch is a bituminous substance," rather a difficult beginning, we should think, to have brought to a successful conclusion.

Sometimes we have heard a very unnecessary

catalogue of technicalities joined with several propositions in one sentence. It is hardly to be imagined how this increases the difficulty to a beginner ; whilst it impresses the excellence of that simplicity and clearness, which were so charming in Abernethy. We give an example of this defect : the lecturer is describing the continuation of the cuticle over the eyes of the crustacea, as lobsters, crabs, &c. “The epidermis (the cuticle) in the compound eyes of the crustacea, passes transparent and homogeneous over the external surface of the thick layer of the prismatic corneæ, which are here, as in insects, generally hexagonal, but sometimes quadrangular ; and to the internal ends of the prismatic corneæ are applied the broad bases of the hard tapering transparent lenses, which have their internal truncated apices directed to the retinal expansions of the numerous optic nerves.”

The high respect we entertain for the lecturer here alluded to, withholds us from attempting to supply a more homely version of the foregoing passage. But what an idea this must give to

a student, who reads it in "the outlines" of a science, of which he is about to commence the study. There is nothing whatever difficult in the ideas themselves, but what a bristling *chevaux-de-frise* of hard words, what a phalanx of propositions! We fear we should never arrive at the knowledge of many of those beautiful adaptations which all animals exemplify, if we had to approach them by such a forbidding pathway.

As contrasted with simple facts thus obscured by an unnecessary complexity of expression, we may see in Abernethy how a very comprehensive proposition may be very simply expressed. Take almost the first sentence in his Surgical Lectures, the germ, as it were, of a new science: "Now I say that
 "local disease, injury, or irritation may affect
 "the whole system, and conversely that disturb-
 "ance of the whole system may affect any
 "part."

We have sometimes thought, that lecturers who have had several desirable qualifications, have materially diminished the attraction of

them by faults, which we hardly know how to designate by a better term than vulgarity, ill-breeding, or *gaucherie*. Now Abernethy had in the first place that most difficult thing to acquire, the appearance of perfect ease, without the slightest presumption. Some lecturers appear painfully "in company;" others have a self-complacent assurance, that conveys an unfavourable impression to most well-bred people. Abernethy had a calm, quiet sort of ease, with that expression of thought, which betokened respect for his task and his audience, with just enough of effort only, to show that his mind was in his business.

He had no offensive tricks. We have known lecturers, who never began without making faces, others who intersperse the lecture with unseemly gesticulations. Some on the most trivial occasion, as referring to a diagram, are constantly turning their backs completely to the audience. This is, we know, disagreeable to many people, and unless a lecturer is very clear and articulate, occasionally renders his words not distinctly audible. Even in ex-

plaining diagrams, it is seldom necessary to turn quite round, the smallest inclination towards the audience satisfies the requisitions of good breeding; and reminds them agreeably of a respect, with which they never fail to be pleased, and of the lecturer's self-possession. There are, indeed, occasions, when the lecturer had better turn a little aside.

Not long ago, we heard a very sensible lecturer, and a very estimable man, produce an effect, which was rather ludicrous; a very inconvenient, impression when not intended. He had been stating very clearly some important facts, and he then observed: "The great importance of these facts I will now proceed to explain to you," when he immediately began to apply the pocket-handkerchief he had in his hand, most elaborately to his nose, still fronting the audience. It had the most ridiculous effect, and followed so closely on the preceding remark, as to suggest to the humorously inclined, that it was part of the proposed explanation.

Some think it excusable to cast their eyes

upwards, with an expression of intense thought, or even to carry their hands to their heads or forehead for the same purpose. But this conveys a painful feeling to the audience, whose attention to the subject is apt to be diverted, by sympathy with the apparent embarrassment of the lecturer. Sometimes it conveys the impression of affectation, which of course is one form of vulgarity.

Abernethy was remarkably free from anything of the kind. The expression of his countenance was, in the highest degree, clear, penetrative, and intellectual; and his long but not neglected powdered hair, which covered both ears, gave altogether a philosophic calmness to his whole expression that was peculiarly pleasing. Then came a sort of little smile, which mantled over the whole face, and lighted it up with something which we cannot define, but which seemed a compound of mirth, archness, and benevolence.

The adjustment of the quantity of matter to the time employed in discussing it, is an important point in teaching. A lecture too long, is not worse than a lecture too full. If the

matter is spread too thinly, the lecture is bald and uninteresting, and apt to fall short of representing any integral division of a subject; if it be too thick it is worse, for then all is confused and difficult. A man's brain is like a box packed in a hurry; when all is done, you neither know what you have got nor what you have forgotten.

Here, again, Abernethy was in general very happy. Various circumstances would sometimes indeed, in the Anatomical Course, oblige him to put more into one lecture than was usual; but he had always in such a case some little manœuvre to sustain the attention of his audience. No man ever carried the *ars est celare artem* to so successful a point. Everything he did had its object, every joke or anecdote its particular errand, which was in general most effectively fulfilled.

The various ways in which Abernethy managed to lighten up the general lecture, or to illustrate single points, can hardly be conveyed by selection of particular examples. There was a sort of running metaphor in his language, which, aided by a certain quaintness of manner,

made common things go very amusingly. Muscles which pursued the same course to a certain point, were said to travel sociably together and then to "part company." Blood-vessels and nerves had certain habits in their mode of distribution contrasted in this way; arteries were said to *creep* along the sides or between muscles. Nerves, on the contrary, were represented as penetrating their substance "*without ceremony.*" Then he had always a ready sympathy with his audience. If a thing was difficult, he would, as we have said, anticipate the feelings of the student. This is always encouraging, because when a student finds a point difficult, if he is diffident merely, he is depressed; if he is lazy, he finds too good an excuse for it.

His illustrations were usually drawn from some familiar source, and if they were calculated to impress the fact, he was not very scrupulous whence he drew them. This would sometimes lead him into little trippings against refinement, but these were never wanton; everything had its object, from the most pathetic tale down to the smallest joke. When the

thing to be impressed was not so much single facts or propositions, as a more continued series, he had an admirable mode of pretending to con over the lecture in a manner which he would first recommend students to do, something after this fashion: "Let me see, what did he say?" "Well, first he told us that he should speak of Matter in general; then he said something about the laws of Matter, of inertia, &c." "Well, I did not understand much of that, and I don't think he knew much about it himself," and so on. There would now be a general smile, the attention of the class would be thoroughly alive, and then he would in this conning over bring forward the points he most wished to impress of the whole lecture. A very striking proof of how much power he had in this way came out in a conversation I had with Dr. Thomas Rees. This gentleman knew Abernethy well, and in kindly answering some inquiries I made of him, he spoke of his power in lecturing. Amongst other things, he said: "The first lecture I ever heard him give, impressed me very much, I thought it admirable.

His skill appeared so extraordinary. At the conclusion of the lecture," said Dr. Rees, "he proposed to the students to con over the lecture, which he proceeded to do for them." Dr. Rees then continued repeating the heads of the lecture, and this after at least thirty, perhaps forty years.

Lecturers will illustrate sometimes a point by something more difficult still, or something drawn from another branch of science. Sometimes the illustrations are so lengthy or even important, that a pupil forgets *what principle* it was that was *to be illustrated*. When we are desirous of learning something about water or air, it is painful for a pupil to be "reminded" of the "properties of angles," which it is an even chance he never knew. It is equally uncomfortable to many an audience, in lectures on *other subjects*, to have the course of a cannon-ball, which three pieces of string would sufficiently explain, for mere purposes of illustration, charged with the "laws of projectiles," the "composition of forces," &c. We are of course not thinking of *learned* but of *learning* audiences, to the former, lectures are of course of no use, but we allude

to learners of mixed information and capacity; like young men who have been residing with medical men in the country; who come to a lecture for information, and who require to be interested in order that they may be instructed. Abernethy's illustrations were always in simple language. Rough ridden sometimes by a succession of many footed Greek compounds, the mind of a student loves to repose on the refreshing simplicity of household phrases.

Abernethy had stories innumerable. Every case almost was given with the interest of a tale; and every tale impressed some lesson or taught some relation in the structure, functions or diseases of the body. We will give one or two, but their effect lay in the admirable manner in which they were related.

If he was telling anything at all humorous, it would be lighted up by his half-shut, half-smiling, and habitually benevolent eye. Yet his eye would easily assume the fire of indignation when he spoke of cruelty or neglect, showing how really these things were repulsive to him. Then his quiet, almost stealthy, but highly dra-

matic imitation of the manner of some singular patient. His equally finished mode of expressing pain, in the subdued tone of his voice; and then when something soothing or comfortable was successfully administered, his "Thank you, Sir, thank you, that is very comfortable," was just enough always to interest and never to offend. Now and then he would sketch some patient who had been as hasty as he himself was sometimes reported to be. "Mr. Abernethy, I am come, Sir, to consult you about a complaint that has given me a great deal of trouble." "Show me your tongue, Sir. Ah, I see your digestive organs are very wrong." "I beg your pardon, Sir, there you are wrong yourself, I never was better in all my life," &c. All this, which is nothing in telling, was delivered in the half-serious, half Munden-like, humorous manner, and yet so subdued as never to border on vulgarity or farce.

His mode of relating cases, which involved some important principle, showed how really interested he had been in them. A gentleman having recovered from a very serious illness,

after having failed a long time in getting relief, was threatened by the influence of the same causes with a return of his malady. "He thought," said Abernethy, "that if he did not drink deeply, he might eat like a glutton." He lived in the country, and Mr. Abernethy one day went and dined with him. "Well," said Mr. Abernethy, "I saw he was at his old tricks again; so, being a merchant, I asked him what he would think of a man who, having been thriving in business, had amassed a comfortable fortune, then went and risked it all in some imprudent speculation?" "Why," said the merchant, "I should think him a great ass." "Nay, then, Sir," said Abernethy, "thou art the man."

On another occasion a boy having suffered severely from disease of the hip, Abernethy had enjoined his father to remove him from a situation which he was unfitted to fill, and which, from the exertion it required, would expose him to a dangerous recurrence of his complaint. The father, however, put the boy back to his situation; one day Abernethy met

both father and son in Chancery Lane, and he saw the boy, who had a second time recovered, again limping in his walk. After making the necessary inquiry, "Sir," said he to the father, "did I not warn you, not to place your son in that situation again." The father admitted the fact. "Then, Sir," said Abernethy, "if that boy dies, I shall be ready to say you are his murderer." Sure enough, the boy had another attack, and did die in a horrible condition.

This story, and others of a similar kind, were intended to impress the paramount importance of keeping diseased parts, *and joints especially*, in a state of perfect repose; and to prevent recurrence of disease, by avoiding modes of life inappropriate to constitutions, which had exhibited a tendency to this serious class of diseases.

He was remarkably good on the mode of detecting and managing accidents, fractures, and dislocations. In regard to the latter, he had many very good stories, of which we will presently cite a ludicrous example. He could, however, throw in pathos with admirable skill when he desired it. The following lamentable

case, he used to tell to an audience singularly silent. He is speaking of the course of a large artery.

“Ah,” said he, “there is no saying too much
“on the importance of recollecting the course
“of large arteries ; but I will tell you a case.
“There was an officer in the navy, and as
“brave a fellow as ever stepped, who in a
“sea-fight received a severe wound in the
“shoulder, which opened his axillary artery.
“He lost a large quantity of blood, but the
“wound was staunched for the moment, and
“he was taken below. As he was an officer,
“the surgeon, who saw he was wounded
“severely, was about to attend to him, before
“a seaman who had been just brought down.
“But the officer, though evidently in great
“pain, said: ‘Attend to that man, Sir, if you
“please, I can wait.’ Well, his turn came,
“the surgeon made up his mind, that a large
“artery had been wounded ; but as there was
“no bleeding, dressed the wound, and went on
“with his business. The officer lay very faint
“and exhausted for some time, and at length
“began to rally again, when the bleeding re-

“turned; the surgeon was immediately called,
“and not knowing, where to find the artery,
“or what else to do, told the officer he must
“amputate his arm at the shoulder joint. The
“officer at once calmly submitted to this addi-
“tional but unnecessary, suffering; and as the
“operator proceeded, asked if it would be long;
“the surgeon replied, that it would be soon
“over, the officer rejoined: ‘Sir, I thank God
“for it!’ but he never spake more.”

Amidst the death-like silence of the class, Abernethy calmly concluded: “I hope you
“will never forget the course of the axillary
“artery.”

His position was always easy and natural, sometimes homely perhaps. In the Anatomical Lecture he always stood, and either leant against the wall, with his hands folded before him, or resting one hand on the table, with the other perhaps in his pocket. In his Surgical Lecture he always sat, and very generally with one leg resting on the other.

He was particularly happy in a kind of cozi-ness, or friendliness of manner which seemed to

identify him with his audience; as if we were all about to investigate something interesting *together* and not as if we were going to be "Lectured at," at all. He spoke as if addressing each individual, and his discourse, like a happy portrait, always seemed to be looking you in the face. On very many accounts the tone and pitch of the voice in lecturing are important. First: That it may not be inaudible, and yet not too loud. The one defeats the whole object, the other is apt to give an impression of vulgarity. We recollect a gentleman who was about to deliver a lecture in a theatre to which he was unaccustomed; he was advised to ascertain the loudness required, and to place a friend in the most distant part, to judge of its fitness; but he declined it, as unnecessary. When he had given the lecture, which was a very good one on a very interesting subject, he was much mortified in finding that he had been inaudible to at least one half of the audience.

Abernethy was very successful in this respect. His voice seldom rose above what we may term the conversational, either in pitch or

tone ; it was in general pleasing in quality, and enlivened by a sort of archness of expression. His loudest tone was never oppressive to those nearest to him, his most subdued audible everywhere. The range of pitch was very limited ; the expression of the eye, and a slight modulation being the media by which he infused through the lecture an agreeable variety ; or gave to particular sentiments the requisite expression. There was nothing like declamation ; even quotations were seldom louder than would have been admissible in a drawing-room. We have heard lecturers whose habitually declamatory tone has been very disagreeable, and this seldom fails to be mischievous. A declamatory tone tends to divert the attention, or to weary it when properly directed. On almost every subject it is sure to be the source of occasional bathos, which now and then borders on the ridiculous. Conceive a man describing a curious animal in the diagram, saying : " This part, to which I now direct my rod, is the point of the tail," in a sepulchral tone, and heavy cadence, as if he had said :

“This is the end of all things.” Another inconvenience often attending a declamatory tone, as distinguished from the narrative, or descriptive, is the tendency it has to make a particular cadence. Sometimes we have heard lecturers give to every other sentence a peculiar fall; and this succession of rhythmical samenesses, if the lecturer be not otherwise extremely able, sends people napping.

Another fault we observe in some lecturers is, a reiteration of particular phrases. In description, it is not easy always to avoid this; but it seldom occurred in any disagreeable degree in Abernethy. We have heard some lecturers, in describing things, continually reiterating such phrases as “We find,” “It is to be observed,” in such quick and frequent succession, that people’s sides began to jog in spite of them.

Provincial or national idiom, or other peculiarity, is by no means uncommon, and generally more or less disagreeable. Abernethy was particularly free from either. He could, in telling stories, slightly imitate the tone and manner of the persons concerned; but it was always touched in,

in the lightest possible manner, and with the subdued colouring and finish of a first-rate artist. His power of impressing facts and of rendering them simple and interesting by abundance and variety of illustration, was very remarkable, and had the effect of imparting an interest to the driest subject. In the first place, he had an agreeable mode of sympathizing with the difficulty of the student. If he were about to describe a bone, or anything which he knew to be difficult, he would adopt a tone more like that in which a man would teach it to himself, than describe it to others. For example, he would say perhaps: "Ah! this is a queer-looking bone; it has a very odd shape, but I plainly perceive that one may divide it into two parts." Then pointing with a probe to the division he proposed, he would begin, not so much to *describe* as to *find*, as if for the first time, the various parts of which he wished to teach the names and uses; the description being a kind of running accompaniment to his tracing of the bone, and in a tone as if half talking to himself and half to the audience.

Every one feels the importance of order, and clearness of arrangement. Of Abernethy's, we have spoken generally in the first volume; simplicity and impressing the more important facts were the main objects. He showed very frequently his perception of the importance of order, and would often methodize for the students. He knew very well that A B C was much more easily remembered than Z J K; and he would sometimes humorously contrast the difference between a man whose knowledge was well packed, and one whose information was scattered and without arrangement. This he usually did by supposing two students under examination. The scene would not *tell* upon paper; but it never failed to create a good deal of mirth in the theatre, during which he would contrive to repeat the facts he meant to impress, without the tedium of mere reiteration.

Various people have been more or less deeply impressed with different parts of his lectures, most persons having their favourite passages. In his anatomical course we were never more

pleased than by his *general* view of the structure of the body. He adopted on that occasion the synthetical plan, and put in imagination the various parts together which were to be afterwards taught analytically. In his surgical course, the manner in which he illustrated the practical points, and his own views in the "Eventful History of a Compound Fracture," was, we think, the most successful triumph both as to matter and manner, which we have ever witnessed.

An abundance of resource and manœuvres of the kind we have mentioned, gave a great "liveliness" to his lecture, which, *in its quiet form so as not to divert or disturb*, is a great difficulty in lecturing.

We have heard an excellent lecturer whose only fault, we think, was want of liveliness and variety. Few men could in other respects lecture comparably to him. Nothing could surpass the quiet, polished manner of this accomplished teacher. His voice, though not good, was by no means unpleasing. His articulation elaborately distinct and free from all provincialism.

His language always correct and appropriate; the structure of his sentences strikingly grammatical; and they fell in such an easy, though somewhat too rhythmical succession, as to be at once graceful and melodious. His arrangement, always simple and clear. Nothing was more striking than the deferential manner in which he approached a philosophical subject. "I like ——," said one who had often heard him, "because he is always so gentlemanly. There is nothing off-hand, as if he thought himself very clever, but a kind of unaffected respect for himself and his audience, which obliges one to pay attention to him, if it were only because you feel that a man of education is speaking to you."

What, it may be said, can such a man want? Why he wanted liveliness and flexibility. His voice measured forth its gentlemanly way with all the regularity of a surveying rod. Various and interesting as his subjects were, and handled with consummate ability, he must certainly have *taught*; yet we think he sent away many of his audience

passive recipients, as distinguished from persons set on thinking what they had heard "into their own."

He performed his task like a good man and a scholar, but still it was like a task after all. It was something like a scholar reading a book, always excepting the beautifully clear illustrations for which his subject gave him abundant opportunity. He wanted that animation and interest in his subject by which a lecturer inoculates you with his own enthusiasm: He was the most striking example in our experience of the importance of liveliness and variety, and of making a lecture, however well delivered, just that thing which we *cannot* find in a book. The life-like, the dramatic effect was wanting; and it was to this alone that we can ascribe what we have not unfrequently observed in the midst of a generally attentive audience, a few who were "nodding" their assent to his propositions.

Now Abernethy's manner was perfect in these respects. He had just got the "cheerfully, not too fast" expression, that we sometimes see at

the head of a musical composition. His manner was so good, that it is difficult to convey any idea of it. It was easy without being negligent; cheerful without being excited; humorous, often witty, without being vulgar; expeditious without being in bustle; and he usually took care that you should learn *the thing* before he gave the *name of it*, and understand it before he expatiated on the beauty or perfection of its adaptation to the ends it seemed designed to serve.

He was particularly chaste in the manner, in which he spoke of design, or other of the Attributes so frequently observable in natural arrangements. It is a great mistake, we think, and not without something akin to vulgarity, to usher in any description of the beauties of nature, by a flourish of such trumpets as human epithets form—mere notes of admiration—nature speaks best for herself. The mind is kept in a state of excitement by too frequent *feux de joies* of this kind; the frequent recurrence of such terms as “curious! strange! wonderful!” on subjects where all is

wonderful, have a sort of bathos in the ears of the judicious, while to the less critical they produce a sort of disturbed atmosphere, which is unfavourable to the calm operations of the intellect.

Abernethy was generally very careful in these matters. I give one example. He is speaking of cartilage, or gristle, which covers the ends of the bones where they form joints, and has explained its great elasticity, the use of it in preventing jarring; and contrasted the *springiness* of youth with the easily jarred frame of age. "Well," he adds, "this cartilage is fibrous, and they say that the fibres are arranged vertically; so that the body may be said to be supported on '*myriads of elastic columns.*'" That was the beauty by which he wished to impress that which he had previously *taught*.

When marvellousness is too much excited, many say, "Ah, how clever that gentleman is! what an interesting lecture! what a curious thing that was he showed us!" but when you inquire what principle or law was intended

to be illustrated, you find that the sensual or imaginative faculty has alone been excited, and has galloped off with that which was intended for the intellect. If persons are examined, as to a particular point of the lecture, they are apt to say: "Well, that is just what I wanted to know, would you explain it."

It would seem that it is a great mistake to excite marvellousness on our external senses very vividly, when we desire to concentrate the intellectual faculties. That breathless silence, with eyes and mouth open, that "*intenti que ora tenebant*" condition, excited by marvellousness, is very well for the story of Æneas, or Robinsón Crusoe; but it is out of place, when we are endeavouring to augment our intellectual possessions.

We require, in fact, a calmer atmosphere. The desire to interest and hold the attention of our audience, is so natural, that it is very apt to escape one, that this may be done on terms not consistent with our real object, the interesting the intellect; and this fault is perhaps of all the worst, because it is never

a greater failure, than when it appears to be successful. All other faults in lecturing, if serious in one respect, tell their own tale in the thinning audience.

The learned author of the "Philosophy of Rhetoric" has observed: "A discourse directed to the understanding will not admit of an address to the passions, which, as it never fails to disturb the operation of the intellectual faculty, must be regarded by every intelligent hearer as foreign indeed, if not insidious." He had before said, "that in such a discourse you may borrow metaphor or comparison to illustrate it, but not the bolder figures, prosopopœia and the like, which are intended not to elucidate the subject, but to *create admiration.*"

"It is obvious," he continues, "that either of the foregoing, far from being subservient to the main design (to address the intellect), serves only to distract the attention from it."*

The learned author, however, in the first

* Vol. 1, p. 23.

sentence makes a distinction, which requires, perhaps, to be received with some caution.

There is no discourse that is solely intellectual; the driest mathematical proposition interests our feelings. The pleasure of truth, what is that? Not merely intellectual, certainly. It is a pleasure derived *from* the intellect, no doubt, but it is a *feeling* entirely distinct. So, in addresses to the passions, if they are successful, the presiding influence of the intellect, is very obvious; this away, a discourse soon merges into bombast or fustion, a something which neither impresses the feelings nor the passion as desired.

The true desideratum, as it appears to us, is accuracy of adjustment, not separation. In intellectual operations, the feelings are to be subservient to the accomplishment of the objects of the intellect. In discourses, where the passions or feelings are most appealed to, or most prominent, the intellect must still really guide, though it may appear to follow.

Notwithstanding that so much of Abernethy's lecturing was on anatomy, and therefore neces-

sarily addressed to the eye, yet he seldom offered any illustration to the external senses. He was always endeavouring to impress the mechanical relations of parts, by reference to their uses and surgical relations. Even in speaking of light, he would be suggestive beyond the mere perception of sense. He used to say of refraction of light, when the refracting medium was, as it commonly is, the denser body, "that the ray seems as if attracted," a very suggestive phrase to any one who has thought much on the subject of light. It is a curious thing to observe how confused the ideas of many people are on phenomena of light, and we are afraid that the cause is that the illustrations to the eye are given *too soon*. If people were made to *understand* by a simple illustration what they are about to *see*, it is probable they would have much clearer ideas. The intellect having gone before, the eye no longer diverts it from its office; and the eye would then be merely *impressing* by means of a physical representation an established idea.

CHAPTER VI.

“*Suavis autem est et vehementer sæpe utilis jocus et facetiæ.*”—CIC. DE ORAT.

ABERNETHY'S humour was very peculiar, and though there was of course something in the matter, there was a great deal more, as it appeared to us, in the manner. The secret of humour, we apprehend, lies in the juxtaposition, either expressed or implied, of incongruities, and it is not easy to conceive anything humorous which does not involve these conditions. We have sometimes thought there was just this difference in the humour of Abernethy, as contrasted with that of Sidney Smith. In Smith's

there was something that, told by whom it might be, was always ludicrous. Abernethy's generally lay in the telling.

“The jest's propriety lies in the ear
Of him who hears it, never in the tongue
Of him that makes it,”

although true, was still to be taken in rather a different sense from that in which it is usually received. The former (a far higher species of humour) may be recorded; the dramatic necessities of the other, occasion it to die with the author. The expression Abernethy threw into his humour (though of course without that broadness which is excusable in the drama, but which would have been out of place in a philosophical discourse), was a quiet, much-subdued colouring between the good nature of Downton, and (a little closer perhaps to the latter) the more quiet and gentlemanly portions of Munden.

Few old pupils will forget the story of the Major who had dislocated his jaw.

This accident is a very simple one, and easily put right; but having once happened, is apt to

recur on any unusual extension of the lower jaw. Abernethy used to represent this as a frequent occurrence with an hilarious Major; but as it generally happened at mess, the surgeon went round to him and immediately put it in again. One day, however, the Major was dining about fourteen miles from the regiment, and in a hearty laugh out went his jaw. They sent for the medical man, whom, said Abernethy, we must call the apothecary. Well, at first, he thought that the jaw was dislocated, but he began to pull and to show that he knew nothing about the proper mode of putting it right again. On this the Major began to be very excited, and vociferated inarticulately in a strange manner; when, all at once, the doctor, as if he had just hit on the nature of the case, suggested that the Major's complaint was on his brain, and that he could not be in his right mind. On hearing this, the Major became furious, which was regarded as confirmatory of the doctor's opinion; they accordingly seized him, confined him in a strait-waistcoat and put him to bed, and the doctor ordered that

the barber should be sent for to shave the head, and a blister to be applied "to the part affected."

The Major, fairly beaten, ceased making resistance, but made the best signs his situation and his imperfect articulation allowed, for pen and paper. This being hailed as indicative of returning rationality, was procured; and as soon as he was sufficiently freed from his bonds, he wrote—"For God's sake send for the surgeon of the regiment." This was accordingly done, and the jaw readily reduced, as it had been often before. "I hope," added Abernethy, "you will never forget how to reduce a dislocated jaw."

We think what we have said of the style of his humour must be not very incorrect, from knowing that one of his oldest pupils and greatest admirers made a remark almost identical with the foregoing. I recollect it being said of John Bannister, that the reason his acting pleased everybody was that he was always a gentleman; an extremely difficult thing, we should imagine, in handling some of the freer

parts of our comic dialogues. Abernethy's humour (exceptionally indeed) but occasionally a little broad, never suggested the idea of vulgarity; and, as we have said, every joke had its mission. Then, at times, though there was not much humour, yet a promptness of repartee gave it that character.

"Mr. Abernethy," said a patient, "I have something the matter, Sir, with this arm. There, oh! (making a particular motion with the limb) that, Sir, gives me great pain." "Well, what a fool you must be to do it then," said Abernethy.

One of the most interesting facts in relation to Abernethy's lecturing, was that, however great his natural capacity, he certainly owed very much to careful study and practice; and we cannot but think that it is highly encouraging to a more careful education for this mode of teaching, to know the difficulty that even such a man as Abernethy had for some few years in commanding his self-possession. To those who only knew him in his zenith or his decline, this will appear extraordinary; yet, to a careful

observer, there were many occasions when it was easy to see that he did not appear so entirely at ease without some effort. He was very impatient of interruption; an accidental knock at the door of the theatre, which, by mistake of some stranger, would occasionally happen, would disconcert him considerably; and once when he saw some pupil joking or inattentive, he stopped, and with a severity of manner I hardly ever saw before or afterwards, said, "If the lecture, Sir, is not interesting to you, I shall beg you to walk out."

There were, as we shall hereafter observe, perhaps physical reasons for this irritability. He never hesitated, as we occasionally hear lecturers do, nor ever used any notes. When he came to any part that he perhaps wished to impress, he would pause and think for a second or two, with his class singularly silent. It was a fine moment. We recollect being once at his lecture with the late Professor Macartney, who had been a student of Abernethy's. Macartney said, what can it be that enables him to give so much interest to what we have so often heard

before? We believe it to have been nothing but a steady observance of rules, combined with an admirable power *matured by study*.

That which, above everything, we valued in the whole of Abernethy's lectures, was what can hardly be expressed otherwise than by the term, tone. With an absence of all affectation, with the infusion of all sorts of different qualities: with humour, hilarity, lively manner, sometimes rather broad illustrations, at other times, calm and philosophical, with all the character of deep thought and acute penetration; indignation at what was wrong or unfeeling, and pathos in relation to irremediable calamity; yet the thing which surpassed all was, the feeling he inoculated the pupils with, of a high and conscientious calling. He had a way which excited enthusiasm without the pupil knowing why. We are often told by lecturers of the value of knowledge for various purposes—for increasing the power and wealth of the country—of its use in increasing the comforts and pleasures of society, for amassing fortunes, and for obtaining what the world usually means

by the term distinction. But Abernethy created a feeling distinct from and superior to all mere utilitarian purposes. He made one feel the mission of a conscientious surgeon to be a high calling, and spurned in manner as well as matter, the more trite and hacknied modes of inculcating these things. You had no set essay, no long speeches. The moral was like a golden thread artfully interwoven, in a tissue to which it gives a diffusive lustre; which, pervading it everywhere, is obtrusive nowhere.

For example, the conditions attached to the performance of our lowest duties (operations), were the well-ascertained inefficacy of our best powers directed to judicious treatment; the *crowning* test—the conviction that placed in the same circumstances, *we would have the same operation performed on ourselves*. Much of the suggestive lies on these directions. Our sympathies toward the victims of mistake or ignorance, besides the sufferings endured, were heightened, by the patient possessing, or having been bereft of some quality, which called up

those feelings which, in some, the case merely might not have awakened.

A father, who, in subservience to the worldly prospects of his son, placed him in a situation, while he forgot his first duty, the health of his offspring, was the "murderer" of his child. Another victim we have seen was "as brave a fellow as ever stepped," &c.

Humanity and science went hand in hand. His method of *discovering* the nature of dislocations and fractures, by attention to the relative position of parts was admirable, and few of his pupils, who have had much experience, have failed to prove the practical excellence of them. He repudiated nothing more than the too commonly regarded test in fractures of "Grating or Crepitus." Nothing distinguished his examination of a case more than his gentleness, unless it was the clearness with which he delivered his opinions.

To show how important gentleness is; a surgeon had a puzzling case of injury to the elbow. He believed that he knew the nature of the accident, and that he had put the parts

right; but still the joint remained in a half-straight position; and the surgeon, who knew his business, became alarmed lest something had escaped him, and that the joint would be stiff. He proposed a consultation. The joint was examined with great gentleness, and after Abernethy's plan. The boy experienced no pain. Everything appeared in its natural position. The surgeon said: "Now, my boy, bend your arm a little, but no farther than just to reach my finger, and not as much as that if it gives you any pain. This the boy did very gently: after waiting a few minutes, the surgeon again told him to bend it a little more, and upon the same conditions; and so on, until in a very short space of time, perhaps eight or ten minutes, the arm had been completely bent. The boy had been alarmed, and the muscles had become so sensitive that they held the parts with the most painful tenacity; but beyond this, there was nothing the matter.

We cannot help thinking that Abernethy's benevolence had a great influence in directing some of his happiest contributions to practice.

We consider that every sufferer with that serious accident, fracture of the neck of the thigh bone, owes a great portion of any recovery they may have, to Abernethy. It was he who was the real means of overthrowing a dangerous dogma, that such cases could not unite by bone, and who opposed the practice consequent on it, by which reparation by bone became impossible. There was hardly any subject which he touched, which he did not take some view of more or less original; and his reasoning was always particularly simple and to the point. No man, we believe, ever exceeded him in the skill he possessed in conveying ideas from one mind unto another; but he did a great deal more—he sent those who really studied him, away thinking, and led them to work with a kind of pleasure, which was in some sense distinct from any merely practical or professional interest.

He contrived to imbue you with the love of philosophical research in the abstract, with an interest in truth for its own sake; you found yourself remembering the bare facts, not so

much from conscious effects of memory, as from the interest suggestive of observations with which they were so frequently associated. In going over one of his Lectures alone, they seemed to grow and expand under your own reflections. We know not how to express the effect they produced; they seemed to give new pleasure on repetition, to purify your thoughts scarcely less than they animated your onward studies.

In studying their more suggestive passages, you would now and then feel surprize at the number and variety of important practical relations arising out of a single proposition. We are here merely stating our own early impressions of his power; what we really felt, always, was, that great as was the excellence of these Lectures in a scientific or professional sense, there was something more excellent still in the element they contained of intellectual expansion, and of moral improvement.

We cannot indeed say, that they had no faults, but we should be hard driven to point them out; and although we feel how short our

attempt to give some idea of his mode of proceeding, must fall of doing him justice ; still, if there be any truth at all in our representation, it is quite clear, that his negative excellences alone must have implied no ordinary powers. But we must conclude: “ Quid multa? istum
“ audiens equidem sic judicare soleo; quidquid
“ aut addideris aut mutaveris aut de traxeris,
“ vitiosius et deterius futurum.”



CHAPTER VII.

HOR. Is it a custom ?

HAMLET. Ay, marry, is't :

But to my mind, though I am native here
And to the manner born, it is a custom
More honoured in the breach than the observance.

HAMLET, ACT. I, SC. IV.

IF a moralist were to divide his catalogue of immoralities into such as were of general commission, and such as occurred in the conduct of the various trades and professions, we fear the latter division would suggest no very flattering position to humanity. An elevation somewhat above less gifted creatures it might be ; but still we fear it must be at so low a

level as to afford but a humiliating indication of the height from which he had fallen. He would, in too many instances perhaps, find his real claims to his high destiny about equal to the shadowy difference between a creature who fulfils *some* only of his responsibilities, and one who has no responsibilities to fulfil. We should like to hear some grave philosopher discourse on Fashion: it is surely a curious thing, for there is a fashion in everything. It is very like habit, but it is not habit neither. Habit is a garment, which takes some time to fit easily and is then not abandoned without difficulty. Fashion is always a good fit *instanter*, but is thrown aside at once without the smallest trouble. The most grotesque or absurd custom which slowly-paced habit bores us with examining, is at once adopted by fashion with a characteristic assentation.

Morals are by no means free from this kind of conventionalism. So much the contrary, that few things evince more strongly the power of fashion. It might be imagined that the multiplication of examples would tend to teach the

true nature of the thing exemplified, but it would not seem so with error; *tout au contraire*. Arts or acts which are tabooed as vicious in the singular number, become, in the plasticity of our moral grammars, very tolerable in the plural. Things that the most hardy shrink from perpetrating single-handed, become easy "compliance with custom" when "joint-stock" vices; practices which, when partial, men are penetrative enough to discover to be unchristian, or sufficiently sensitive to regard as ungentlemanly, pass muster with marvellous lubricity when they become universal. We can anathematize, with self-complacent indignation, vices in which we have no share, but we become abundantly charitable when we discuss those in which we have a common property; and, finally, moral accounts are settled very much to our own satisfaction, as Butler says, by compounding

"For sins we are inclined to,
By damning those we have no mind to."

After all, society keeps a pretty good look-

out after faults of general commission. The law is tolerably comprehensive of things which are of general commission ; and mankind sooner or later, contrive to catch or successfully oppose the numerous little enormities which slip through the finest of our legal meshes.

“Raro antecedentem scelestum,
Deseruit pede poena claudo.”

From all this, it results that moral obliquities which fall within the observation of society, make but an up-hill game ; that which is felt to be prejudicial to the interests of society, is easily determined to be vicious. But here again there is much in fashion ; for it has often determined that the immorality of an act, is not to be measured by the nature of the act, nor the motive even on which it has been founded, so much as by the more refined test, afforded by the position of the *actor* ; like a sort of commercial megatherium, one may gorge with railway velocity that which a once breathing fond affection, and a cold world, alike determined to be the life-blood of widows and orphans, and yet

have noblemen and others for his associates ; he may perhaps be a legislator in a great nation ; whilst the poor starveling, who steals for the vulgar purpose of satisfying hunger, may be sent to the treadmill, where he may solve at leisure the problem which “ the most enlightened nation on the earth,” has thus set him.

Again, vices which have a known influence in disturbing the relations of society, are in various ways opposed by the more public influences of religion. So that in the end, although a man may arrive at the conclusion—only by exhausting all other views before he hits on those which lead to it—he finds that honesty is as good a way of getting on as any other ; or he may advance perhaps even on this utilitarian creed so far as to agree with Tillotson, that people take more trouble to get to Hell, than would suffice to carry them to Heaven. The immoralities of trades and professions lie in a different position, and involve certain peculiarities, which favour their growth and perpetuity.

They are committed in secret ; people are proverbially cautious of attacking the weak

positions of others, who feel that their own retreats are equally ill-defended. This and the established conventionalism of each calling, enables an individual to do a good deal off his own bat, without, as one of our bishops happily expressed it, "being caught out." In trade, we are sometimes informed, that a thing cannot be sold cheaper, that the price asked is already less than the cost; and people are appropriately addressed as idiots, who every day appear to believe that which common sense shows to be an impossibility.

Your purveyors will sometimes tell you, that they are not living by the prices they charge; although you have just ascertained that the same article may be bought at infinitely less cost in the next market. The other day a watchmaker told us that our watch wanted a good deal of looking to, and, amongst other things, "no doubt cleaning;" but this he discovered, we suppose, by some recondite mesmerism process in a book, which recorded when it had been cleaned last, without looking at the watch at all.

As regards professions, lawyers are said to defend right and wrong with indiscriminate avidity, with the encouraging prospect of obtaining more fruit in maintaining one wrong cause, than establishing twenty right.

Then the real nature of these things is, like many in other sciences, obscured by a somewhat cloudy nomenclature. We hear of "customs of the trade," "secrets of the trade," or profession, applied to things, which the moralist only recognizes under very different designations. Sophisms thus secured, and which appear to minister to a man's interests, have their true colours developed with difficulty; to say nothing of its not being easy to discover that which there is no desire to examine.

If any man should be so "peculiar," or "crotchety," to consider that names are of little import, and that "Vice is vice, for a' that," and venture to anathematize any custom, or even refuse to be an accessory, in declining to wink at it, he may encounter charges of violating professional confidence, overlooking a proper *esprit de corps*, and be outvoted; for no

better reason, than that he cannot concur in the dogma, that a vicious sophism is more valuable than a simple truth ; or, agree with the currier, " that leather is the best material for fortification ;" he may possibly be let off by conceding his connivance ; which is little better than declining to be thief, as too shocking, but having no objection to the more lubricated position of the receiver.

But does any one for one moment believe, that all this can be hung on any trade, or profession, with no effect ? or that it will not have a baneful influence on every calling, and that in proportion as its real and proper duties, are beneficent and exalted ? Now, whilst we claim for the medical profession a position which, in its single-mindedness and benevolence, yields to no other whatever, we fear it is not wholly free from these technical besettings.

In the medical profession we trust that which we, for want of a better term, designate as technical immoralities, are exceptional. Exceptional they may be, we sincerely hope, and believe they are ; but in a crowded island,

exceptions relatively few, may be absolutely numerous; and whenever they occur, especially if men hold any position, one case of compromise of duty, does more harm, than a hundred of the most inflexible adhesions to it can remedy. Suppose a patient apply to a surgeon with a complaint requiring one operation, and his fears incline him to another; he is informed, it is improper for his case: that so far from relieving him, it will indefinitely increase his sufferings. The patient reiterates his wishes, the surgeon declines doing that which he would not have done in his own person. On lamenting what he believes to be the consequences of the patient's determination, to a brother surgeon, he is met by: "What a fool you must be, to throw away —— guineas; if you don't do it, somebody else will."

He is quite right in his prediction, and so is the surgeon who refused to operate, and he has lost a large fee; he receives the verification of his prediction subsequently from the patient, who exclaims, "Sir, I never have a moment's ease!" and when after weeks of suffering the patient dies, the surgeon consoles himself with

the melancholy satisfaction of not having contributed to sufferings, which he was called in too late to remedy.

The more plastic practitioner has, it is true, taken fifty or a hundred guineas, it may be, out of the one pocket, and put it into his own; but in what way are mankind benefited? or does any one really think, that the apparent gainer can ultimately be so? The fault in this, as in many other cases, is the ignorance of the public. There is nothing in the foregoing sketch, that was not as easily intelligible to the commonest understanding, as that two and two are equal to four? And is it no evil, that one man should pay so large a sum for so plain a piece of honesty? or that another should be rewarded, as the case may be, for ignorance, or a compromise of his duty?

Let us take another case. A gentleman was called on to give a certificate; he examined the case, and found that the wording of the certificate called on him to certify to that which was diametrically opposite to the fact. He naturally declined, and, as the point was of some

importance, went to the parties to explain. He was then informed that two professional men had, the previous day, given the certificate without hesitation. He is complimented on his conscientiousness, but never employed again by that family; and he has the further satisfaction of hearing that his place is supplied by one of his accommodating brethren! We fear that in such a case there is a balance to be adjusted between the several persons, and an appropriate appellation to be discovered besides. We respectfully leave it to the reader's judgment to adjust the one; and to draw on his aptitude for nomenclature to supply the other.

In another case, a man is called in to a consultation; he disapproves of the treatment, but declares to the friends that everything has been very properly done. Another is called in, and everything having been really conducted properly, he commences an *apparently* different treatment, but essentially the same, without giving his confiding brother the benefit which his acquiescence in his views would necessarily

imply. In an operation, where the course is doubtful and the opinion various, the choice is left to the patient—that is, the decision of how the surgeon is to act is to be determined by him who is confessedly really least capable of judging. Can it be right to perform a *doubtful* operation under such circumstances? Should not the patient reflect that the *temptations* are all on one side? The attempt to dispense with the operation is laborious, time-consuming, anxious, encouraged perhaps only by small, minute accessions of improvement, interspersed with complaints of tedium and delay, whilst the operation is a work of a few minutes, the remuneration munificent, the *éclat* productive, and the labour nothing. All this and much more the best cannot entirely prevent; the real cause is the ignorance of the public, which a very little of the labour they bestow on many far less important subjects, would easily and quickly dispel.

If these and multitudes of similar things are evils; if they contribute to debase a profession, and to charge the conscientious with unthankful

office and unrequited labour, and to confer fame and profit on a triumphant chicanery; we surely must feel indebted, not only as professional men—not merely as patients, but in a far higher and wider sense—to a man who, availing himself of a commanding position for the highest purposes, has endeavoured, by precept and example, to oppose all such proceedings, and to cultivate a high *morale* in the conduct of the profession. Now no one more sedulously aimed at this effect than John Abernethy; and although we shall not, we trust, be accused of underrating the obligations we owe him in a professional or scientific sense, we think that, great as they are, they are at least equalled by those arising out of that duty-to-your-neighbour spirit which was so universally diffused through everything he taught, and which, in his intercourse with his pupils, he never on any occasion failed to inculcate. We will endeavour to render what we mean intelligible, and perhaps we cannot do this better than by selecting a few illustrations from observation of “Abernethy in Consultation.”

CHAPTER VIII.

“Hoc autem de quo nunc agimus id ipsum est quod utile appellatur.”

CONSULTATION. We are to have a consultation! What a sound is that! How many a heart has been set thumping by this one word. We doubt whether there be any in the English language that has more frequently disturbed the current it was intended to calm. But consultations must be. Already the carriage of a physician has arrived, a tremendous rap has been given at the door, the interesting visitor is already in the library. Another rap, louder somewhat than the former, announces another physician, or a consulting surgeon. The general prac-

itioner, taking advantage of his intimacy with the family, may have perhaps very sensibly walked in without knocking at all. They are now all assembled in the library, and having remarked on a "Storm Scene" by Gaspar Poussin which hangs over the fire-place, we leave them to the preliminaries of a consultation.

Presently they are introduced to the patient, on whom the knocking has already produced some effect. A short pause, and they are again assembled in the library. In a few minutes the bell rings, and the father of a fine young woman is summoned to hear their decision. As he proceeds, he stealthily removes a straggling tear that, with all care, would get out of bounds, enters the library, and hears the result of the consultation. Neatly enveloped *honoraria* are presented to the consultants, the bell has rung, Thomas has shown the gentlemen to their respective vehicles, and so ends the consultation.

The father, a widower, returns to the drawing-room, and his second daughter says: "Well, papa, what do the doctors say of Emily?"

“Well, my dear, they say that Emily is very ill; that she requires great care; that they cannot say positively, but they hope she may ultimately do well. They entirely coincide with our friend Mr. Smith Jones as to the nature of the disease, and think his treatment of the case has been highly judicious. They say there are some points on which the case may turn, but of which they cannot speak positively to-day; but they hope to be able to do so when they meet again, which they are to do the day ‘after to-morrow.’ They all seem to consider the nervous system very much affected. They say we must keep Emily very quiet. She is to have any light diet she desires, and to have some new medicine to-morrow. The cod-liver oil, they say, has done her all the good now that it is calculated to do, and she is this evening to take a composing draught.” The family are silent, and so ends the consultation.

What! and are all consultations like that? No, reader, we hope not. Many a valuable life has, we believe, been saved or prolonged by consultation, and perhaps many more would be

if people would only think a little more before they act in such important matters.

But how is this to be, when men and women who *do* think will dive into all other branches of knowledge, more or less, and neglect all inquiry into laws, a *general* knowledge of which may easily be acquired, and of which ignorance is so frequently visited by no less punishment than the premature separation of our dearest ties, and the loss or impairment of that which is acknowledged to be the first of temporal blessings. There are many things in consultations which require putting right, which do not depend on any man or on any one class. What are we to say to a man who admits the ability, and approves of the investigative power and practice of another, but who cannot call him in because he orders so little medicine? Or of the mode in which the public treat another, who, wishing to practise as a gentleman, and to be paid for his brains rather than his bottles, makes no charge for the latter; and yet who informed us that, having tried this for three years, he lost so many families by it, that

if he had not relinquished the plan, he should have wanted bread for his own? Or who shall we blame when one man, calling in another to a patient, finds that this latter feels no scruple in repaying the *prestige* which he thus owes to his confiding brother by taking the patient from him the first opportunity, albeit that he occupies what should be, and, we trust as the rule is, a higher walk in the profession.

We have seen so much feeling arising from this practice, and we hold it as so serious an error, that we regard it as tending more than any one thing whatever to injure the position and character of the consulting branches of the profession.

Again, how inconsiderate must be the adoption of that custom which first of all institutes an inquiry to ascertain whether there is any difference of opinion, and yet accompanies it with trammels, the tendency of which is to oblige men to appear to agree. When coincidence of opinion is alone safe, who can be expected to differ? The public have allowed the lawyers to differ without that difference

involving any reproach. They have also proverbially determined that "doctors do." Yet that which they regard as an almost necessary rule in the one case, they are very prone to visit in regard to some one of the dissentients, as a proof of professional inferiority in the other. A great deal of mischief results from this state of things; it indefinitely increases the difficulty of obtaining a really honest and unreserved opinion, and leads to other consequences which tend to impair that mutual confidence between man and man which should be the very life-blood of a fine profession.

We recollect a case, on the nature of which two surgeons were consulted; and when the patient—a young lady—had been withdrawn, the father requested to know if there were any objection to his being present at the conference. The surgeon to whom he seemed to address himself said: "None on my part;" to which the other *seemed* to give consent. When the consultation was over, the surgeon who had thus *seemed* to consent addressed the other, saying: "If ever we meet again, Sir, our con-

sultation must not be in the presence of the friends of the patient." This was said in a tone to which the other had not been accustomed; but as a lady had just then entered the room, no reply was made. The next morning, however, the gentleman was called on to reconsider the tone in which he had thus addressed his brother consultant, when a satisfactory explanation settled the matter.

Such things, however, are extremely disagreeable, and illustrate how much more easy it is to go straightforward than by any zigzag route. What! could not a father hear the honest opinion of two men concerning his child, until the consultation had been shorn down and dovetailed together so as to be made a symmetrical nondescript adapted to the requisitions of a vulgar conventionalism?

In another case, in a consultation on a disease as plainly scrofulous as it was possible to be, the family attendant had pronounced that it was *constitutional*, but *not* scrofula. This was, it appeared, a miserable assentation to the prejudices of the family, for the result

proved that he knew better. Nevertheless, a consultation had taken place already with a very eminent surgeon, without the family being any the wiser in regard to the nature of the disease. The case not progressing, another surgeon was consulted, who, being asked what he considered the disease to be, replied that it was scrofula. Upon this, considerable surprize and uneasiness was manifested on the part of the family ; and the surgeon, wondering what, in so plain a case, could be the doubt, took occasion to see the former medical attendant, and to ask him what he thought of the case ; when he said that it was clearly scrofula, and that he had *never known the children* of certain temperaments to which he considered the parents to belong, wholly without a tendency to that disease ; so that he had all along been blinding the parents, so far as his opinion and that of another eminent man went, to the real nature of the malady.

A singular occurrence, as we hope, took place one day in consultation, showing how comfortably the most questionable thing may

appear to sit on a man's conscience if only supported by some *supposed* sanction from custom. Two surgeons met to consider a case. They differed as to its nature and treatment as thus — the one thought a certain remedy necessary, and that any prospective consequences on its employment merged into the necessity of the moment; the other thought that remedy wholly unnecessary, and therefore held even the *possibility* of any prospective mischief an insuperable objection to its use; conceding, however, that it *might* possibly, if the treatment were conducted cautiously, be nevertheless so managed as to secure the patient from the consequences in question; and that if the patient preferred that course after the matter had been fairly stated to him, he would superintend the plan.

Having retired into another room to consult, they were now again introduced to the patient, when the junior was somewhat startled to hear his senior begin thus: "Well, Sir, we have considered your case, and we perfectly agree as to the nature of it." Thinking

that this unexpected exordium might possibly be preliminary to some explanation of the points on which they differed, the surgeon waited a minute to hear what followed ; but finding that his brother was irremediably misrepresenting the matter, he said : “ Stop, let us understand each other ! ” and then stated what had really happened, and the exact nature of their respective opinions ; on which the other, in the coolest manner possible, said : “ Yes—exactly, you are quite right ! ” and so ended the “ consultation.”

There is, no doubt, some fault on all sides. The public are too uninformed on these important subjects, and therefore do much that is equally against their own interests and the preservation of that dignity and respect which should ever attach to a high-missioned profession ; but is the profession itself free from blame ? Do they never themselves minister to this wretched system of double dealing ? We fear there is but one answer to this question. We are not careful, for obvious reasons, to multiply examples of such things ; but we are convinced

that there must be a change ; and since the profession cannot, as too many of the public may, plead ignorance ; for this and a thousand other reasons, they should lead the way. We only claim for ourselves what we readily concede to others, the expression of our opinion, when we say that consultations should be *bond fide* examinations of the case, and should be followed by *bond fide intelligible* explanations of it to the *patient* or his *friends* according to the suggestions of ordinary prudence or humanity in the individual case. When the treatment is correct, the most honest proof should be afforded of it—namely, the continuance of the plan of the attendant in ordinary, unobscured by the farce or form of writing a prescription ; or, if *additional* appliance only is adopted, in such a case its subordinate character should be honestly explained.

Where there is difference of view, if it be material, that also should be candidly stated ; and if this be done with *real fairness*, our experience has convinced us that it may be effected without damage to either party. In

other differences of opinion the public never think it necessary to impute ignorance or incapacity ; let them, for their own sakes, repudiate this construction in regard to the medical profession. Lastly, let them for ever abandon the practice of paying any man for his bottles, the number of which will often be in an inverse ratio with his skill and judgment. But where is Abernethy ?

No doubt Abernethy's manner varied in consultation ; but of his manner we shall speak in a separate chapter. We will here record our impressions as to "Abernethy in consultation ;" the conditions which seemed to secure a considerate opinion from him ; the good sense and reasonableness of those conditions ; the practical result of the observance of them, and the effect they were calculated to produce on the public, in giving to consultations that efficiency by which they should be characterized ; an efficiency which *every one* begins to perceive necessary, and which must equally be to the advantage of the public and the elevation of the profession.

CHAPTER IX.

“*Quidquid enim justum sit id etiam utile esse censent; itemque quod honestum idem justum ex quo efficitur ut quidquid honestum sit idem sit utile.*”—
CICERO.

THE first thing in consulting Abernethy, if you were a medical man, was to be clear, and “well up” in the nature of the case, and the next thing, not to state any opinion unless you were prepared to give a good reason for it. These conditions premised, we never saw any one more unaffectedly deferential to the opinion of another.

A surgeon took a serious case to him, in which the question was as to the removal of a very large tumour in the neck, which seemed to be

acquiring connections of such depth and importance, and which threatened, should that step be desirable, to render the removal of it impossible. The patient was advised to allow his surgeon in ordinary to state his case, and to interrupt him only if he omitted anything in regard to it, within the patient's knowledge. This was done; the general habits of the patient described, with the difference which had existed antecedent to the age of thirty, and subsequent thereto. Mr. Abernethy, examined the tumour.

TO THE SURGEON. It is parotid, is it not?

SURGEON. I think not, Sir.

ABERNETHY (*hastily*). Why not?

SURGEON. Because, Sir, reflecting on the depth and situation of the parotid gland, I hardly expect the tumour to be so moveable.

ABERNETHY. Ah, I see! Very well. (Then to the patient.) Well, Sir, I should advise you to attend to your general health, and continue to follow Mr. ——'s advice on that subject. "What I say is—" then followed a short lecture on the digestive organs.

PATIENT. Do you think, Sir, I shall get rid of it?

ABERNETHY. Nay, I cannot tell that; but now suppose you pursue a plan steadily, say for a month, and the tumour does not increase, will it not be encouraging to you?

PATIENT. Certainly, Sir.

ABERNETHY. Well then, try it, for if its removal should become necessary, you will at least be in better condition for the operation. If it does not get larger, or otherwise inconvenience you, let it alone.

The patient had heard so much of Abernethy's roughness, that he came away equally pleased and astonished.

A surgeon took a Colonel in the army to him with a case which was progressing fairly, but as he conceived, in consequence of the patient not paying so much attention to his health as he was recommended to do, not so satisfactorily as he desired. The Colonel briefly stated his case.

ABERNETHY. Show me your tongue. Ah! that is bad enough.

COLONEL. You are quite right there.

ABERNETHY. Well, man, I don't require to be told that.

Here the surgeon stated the treatment, which had in addition to attention to the general health, involved some local administrations, of which, in general, Abernethy approved, but, as it would seem, not in this case. His difference of opinion he thus stated in the presence of the patient.

“ Well, I say that there is a sufficient disorder of your digestive organs to maintain the annoyances of which you complain; and I should confine my attention to endeavour to put that disorder right. Mr. —— seems to think that, in adding to this treatment, the plan he proposes, he will shorten the case. Well, that may be so; he has paid, I know, a good deal of attention to this subject, and if I had one of my own family ill with this complaint, I should feel perfectly satisfied if they were under his care. At the same time I say what I think; and if you do not find the general plan successful, then the means he proposes might with propriety be added.”

No harm resulted from this difference of opinion, but much benefit. The patient was not pleased with Abernethy, but he thought him very skilful and very honest.

One day a surgeon went to him under the following circumstances. A patient who had recently recovered from a lameness which, as alleged, had its cause in the foot, on a relapse had gone to another surgeon. This gentleman had, as it ultimately appeared, hastily decided that the lady had a complaint in the hip ; she was therefore consigned to bed, and then treated for disease of that part. After about three months, feeling no better, she desired to see the surgeon under whose care she had formerly been.

The surgeon was now very much annoyed ; for he found that he had been by many persons charged with having mistaken the case, which he had never even seen on the second attack, and which now presented a phase in which, disease of the hip, to a hasty examiner, might easily be suggested. He was not much better satisfied ; when, after a careful examination of

the case, he felt convinced that there was no disease in the hip, although the symptoms were more severe than ever. He declined undertaking the case without a previous consultation with the surgeon who had decided it to be a disease of the hip; but the patient being immovable in her opposition to the request, and offering any other surgeon or more, if required, her wishes were acceded to, and Mr. Abernethy requested to visit the case. On going to the patient, the surgeon explained to Mr. Abernethy the points at issue, but without telling him to which view his own opinion inclined, or the positive *dictum* of his senior brother a very eminent surgeon. "I shall therefore," said he to Abernethy, "feel particularly obliged to you, Sir, if you will examine the case for yourself."

When they were introduced to the lady, Abernethy said: "Well, now, I should be very well satisfied with Mr. ——'s report of your case, but he says I must examine the limb for myself, so 'here goes,'" a somewhat repulsive beginning to a delicate lady, perhaps; but

nothing could be more cautiously gentle than his examination. In conducting it, he had avoided one test which usually *does* give a little pain. The other surgeon, deeming the decision to be very important, reminded him of this test (raising the limb and striking the heel gently), which he then proceeded to do with equal gentleness. "That will do," said he; "now, Sir, shall we go into another room?" "No, Sir," replied the surgeon; "if you please, Mr. Abernethy, I should prefer your at once telling the patient what is your opinion on the case."

He then declared his opinion; but fearing he might injure one or other party, with the following exordium: "Now, Madam, we are all liable to mistakes: there is no man living who does not make more or less, and I am sure I make mistakes; therefore, I may do so in my opinion of your case, but for the life of me I cannot observe that you have any disease in your hip." He then gave a short but most lucid view of what he conceived to be the cause of her pain, and illustrated it by referring to

something which happened to himself in one of his own severe rheumatic attacks. The result proved that he was quite right as to his view of the case ; the lady, by exercise and other means which, had the hip been diseased, would have only exasperated her complaint, had a good recovery.

One very great charm in Abernethy in consultation was that there was no difficulty in getting him to speak out. Some men are so afraid of being wrong, that they never give you the whole of their opinion in a case involving any difficulty. It is an obscure and a guarded prognosis, which sometimes amounts to no opinion at all.

Even with surgeons who were very unobjectionable, Abernethy in his best manner contrasted very favourably. We recollect being very much struck with this when very young, we had to meet Mr. Cline and Mr. Abernethy within a few days of each other in the same case. Mr. Cline was very kind to the patient, elaborately civil ; nor was there anything

which could be fairly regarded as objectionable; but his manner was too artificial; the contrast in Abernethy was very agreeable. The case was serious, and, as we thought, hopeless. Abernethy, the moment he saw it, had his sympathies painfully awakened. Having asked a few questions, he, in the very kindest manner, said: "Well, I will tell you what I would do were I in your situation." He then proceeded to direct how she should regulate her living, how avoid mischievous experiments, and went into a rather lengthy series of directions, in the most unaffected manner, without leaving the room or having any private consultation whatever. The lady, who was a distinguished person, and a very accomplished woman, was exceedingly pleased with him.

His manner, as we shall by-and-by admit was occasionally rough and sometimes rather prematurely truthful. . One day he was called in consultation by a physician to give an opinion on a case of a pulsating tumour, which was pretty clearly an aneurism. On proceeding to

examine the tumour, he found a plaister on it. "What is this?" said Abernethy. "Oh! that is a plaister." "Pooh!" said Abernethy, taking it off and throwing it aside. "That was all very well," said the physician, "but that 'pooh' took several guineas out of my pocket."

On the other hand, he never failed to give the warmest and most efficient sanction he could to what he conceived to be judicious treatment on the part of the practitioner with whom he was in consultation. Mr. Stowe has kindly sent me a very good example of this, and it illustrates also another very valuable feature in a consultant: the forbearance from *doing anything* where nothing is necessary. A gentleman had met with a severe accident, a compound dislocation of the ankle, an accident that Abernethy was the chief means of redeeming from habitual amputation. The accident happened near Winterslow Hut, on the road between Andover and Salisbury, and Mr. Davis of Andover was called in. Mr. Davis

placed the parts right, and then said to the patient: "Now, when you get well, and have, as you most likely will, a stiff joint, your friends will tell you: 'Ah! you had a country doctor;' so, Sir, I would advise you to send for a London surgeon to confirm or correct what I have done." The patient consented, and sent to London for Abernethy, who reached the spot by the mail about two in the morning. He looked carefully at the limb, and saw that it was in a good position, and was told what had been done. He then said: "I am come a long way, Sir, to do nothing. I might, indeed, pretend to do something; but as any avoidable motion of the limb must necessarily be mischievous, I should only do harm. You are in very good hands, and I dare say will do very well. You may indeed come home with a stiff joint, but that is better than a wooden leg." He took a cheque for his fee, sixty guineas, and made his way back to London.

Soon after this, an old clergyman in the same

neighbourhood had a violent attack of erysipelas in the head and arm. His family becoming alarmed, wrote up to his brother, who resided near Bedford Row, to request Mr. Abernethy to go down and visit the patient. Abernethy said: "Who attends your brother?" "Mr. Davis of Andover." "Well, I told him all I knew about surgery, and I *know* that he has not forgotten it. You may be perfectly satisfied. I shall not go." Here, as Mr. Stowe observes, he might have had another sixty guineas.

He always felt a great deal of interest about compound dislocations of the ankle-joint, because of his conviction that amputation, then so commonly resorted to, was unnecessary. He used to tell several cases in his lectures: one of them we will briefly relate here. It was that of a labouring man who fell off a scaffold in his own neighbourhood, and, amongst other surgeons, they had sent for Abernethy. When he got to the house, he found, he says, "a "poor wee man lying on his mattrass, with a "very complete compound dislocation of the

“ankle-joint. The joint was completely exposed, and the torn skin was overlapping the edge of the bone.” He placed the parts in their natural position, and drew the skin out of the rent; and when he had thus adjusted it, as he says, a horrible accident looked as if there had been very little the matter. “Do you think, Sir,” said the poor little man, “that this can ever get well?” “Yes, verily,” said Abernethy. “Do not be out of heart about it; I have known many such cases do well.” “Why, Sir,” said the man, “they have gone for the instruments.” “I now found,” said Abernethy, “that two other surgeons had seen him, and had determined that it was necessary to amputate. I felt that I had got into an embarrassing predicament, and was obliged to wait until these heroes returned. When they arrived, and saw the man lying so comfortably, they seemed a little staggered; but one of them said: ‘Mr. Abernethy, you know the serious nature of these accidents, and can you give us

“an assurance that this will do well?’ I said:
 “‘No, certainly not; but if it does not do well,
 “you can have recourse to amputation after-
 “wards, and my surgical character is pledged no
 “further than this. I give you the assurance
 “that no immediate mischief will come on to
 “endanger the man’s life. You may wait and
 “see whether his constitution will allow him to
 “do well.’ I added: ‘I feel that I am got
 “rather into a scrape, so you must allow me to
 “manage it in my own way.’ So I got splints,
 “put up the limb, varnished the plaister, and
 “then told them about sponging it continually,
 “so as never to allow any increase of tempera-
 “ture. Now there are two holds you have on a
 “patient’s mind—hope and fear—and I make
 “use of both; so I said: ‘If you lie perfectly
 “still, you will do well, and if you move one jot,
 “you will do ill, that’s all.’” The remainder
 of the case need not be given. The man re-
 covered, and saved his limb.

We have referred to that case because,
 though relating to a professional matter, there is

a moral in it. He might easily have saved himself all the trouble he took, and on the plea of etiquette; but the poverty of the man pleaded for his limb, and the impossibility, in such a case, of the imputation of any wrong motive, left free exercise for the prevailing feature of Abernethy's character—benevolence. The mention of the instruments secured to the poor man that *personal* attention to details by Abernethy himself which a more wealthy patient might not have so certainly obtained.

We have remarked before on his kindness to hospital patients; and sometimes the expression of their gratitude would be very touching. It is difficult or impossible to carry out Mr. Abernethy's principles of practice with *perfect* efficiency in the atmosphere of a large hospital in a crowded city, yet the truth of his views would sometimes be impressed by very extraordinary and unexpected results. We select the following as an example for reasons which will be suggested by the narrative. We are indebted to Mr. Stowe for the illustration,

and as we should only mar the scene by any abbreviation, we must allow him to tell it in his own manner :

“ It was on his first going through the wards after a visit to Bath, that, passing up between the rows of beds, with an immense crowd of pupils after him—myself among the rest—that the apparition of a poor Irishman, with the scantiest shirt I ever saw, jumping out of bed, and literally throwing himself on his knees at Abernethy’s feet, presented itself. For some moments, everybody was bewildered ; but the poor fellow, with all his country’s eloquence, poured out such a torrent of thanks, prayers and blessings, and made such pantomimic displays of his leg, that we were not long left in doubt. ‘That’s the leg, yer honor ! Glory be to God ! Yer honor’s the boy to do it ! May the heavens be your bed ! Long life to your honor ! To the divole with the spalpeens that said your honor would cut it off !’ &c. The man had come into the hospital about three months before, with diseased ankle, and it had been at once condemned to amputation.

Something, however, induced Abernethy to try what *rest* and constitutional treatment would do for it, and with the happiest result.

“With some difficulty the patient was got into bed, and Abernethy took the opportunity of giving us a clinical lecture about diseases and their constitutional treatment. And now commenced the fun. Every sentence Abernethy uttered, Pat confirmed. ‘Thru, yer honor, divole a lie in it. His honor’s the grate dochter entirely!’ While at the slightest allusion to his case, off went the bed-clothes, and up went the leg, as if he were taking aim at the ceiling with it. ‘That’s it, by gorra! and a bitther leg than the villin’s that wanted to cut it off.’ This was soon after I went to London, and I was much struck with Abernethy’s manner; in the midst of the laughter, stooping down to the patient, he said with much earnestness: ‘I am glad your leg is doing well; but never kneel, except to your Maker.’”

The following letter, though containing nothing extraordinary, still shows his usual manner of addressing a patient by letter:

“ Sir,

“ In reply to your letter, I can only say what
 “ I must have said to you in part when you did
 “ me the honour of consulting me.

“ Firstly. That the restoration of the digestive
 “ organs to a tranquil and healthy state, greatly
 “ depends on the strict observance of rational
 “ rules of diet. My opinions on this subject,
 “ which are too long to be transcribed, are to
 “ be met with at page 72, of the first part of
 “ ‘ Abernethy’s Surgical Observations,’ published
 “ by Longman and Co., of Paternoster Row.

“ Secondly. Upon keeping the bowels clear,
 “ yet without irritating them by over-doses of
 “ aperient medicine.

“ Thirdly. I consider the blue pill as a pro-
 “ bilious medicine, and only urge that the dose be
 “ such as to do no harm if it fail to do good, and
 “ then to be taken perseveringly for some time,
 “ in order to determine whether it will not slowly
 “ effect the object for which it was given. In
 “ gouty habits, carbonate of soda, &c. may be
 “ given, to neutralize acidity in the stomach,
 “ with light bitters; but the *prescription of*

“medicines of this kind, as also any advice relative to the cold bath, must rest with your medical attendant.”

Dated the 17th of September; as usual, with him, without the year, which was about 1824.

It is obvious that very few professional letters are adapted for introduction. This was one kindly sent us by Mr. Preston of Norwich, and was written to a gentleman in Yorkshire.

Few things were more pleasing or valuable in Abernethy than his modesty and his sense of justice. He knew his superiority well enough, but he measured it with reference to what was still beyond him, and not by the standard afforded by the knowledge of others. His sense of justice was, we think, never appealed to in vain. The following letter has appeared to us significant in relation to these points. Amid the peaceful glories of a useful profession, there is nothing that sinks deeper or interests our regard more than a man, in the hour of success, remembering what is due to others. We think this remark particularly applicable to the late Mr. Tait, in the following

case. The letter from Abernethy was obligingly sent us by Mr. Tait's son and successor. The remarks with which Mr. Tait concludes his case are as creditable to the writer as to him whom they were intended to honour.

We have stated that Mr. Abernethy had been the first to extend the application of John Hunter's celebrated operation for the cure of aneurism to a vessel nearer the heart (the external iliac artery), on which Mr. Abernethy placed a ligature in 1797. Mr. Tait, of Glasgow, had an extraordinary case of aneurism in both lower extremities, so high up as to oblige him to place a ligature on the external iliac artery on both sides of the body. The case occurred in an old dragoon, and the two operations were performed at separate times, with great judgment and with complete success. The case of course made some noise, and was highly creditable.* In closing his account of the patient, Mr. Tait observes: "The complete
" success which has attended these operations,
" while, certainly, it affords me one of the highest

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, vol. xxvi.

“ gratifications the practice of my profession can
“ procure me, chiefly affects Mr. Abernethy.

“ Accident has placed under my care a case
“ which, so far as I know, is unparalleled in the
“ history of surgery, and it has been cured ; but
“ I have only put in practice what every sur-
“ geon of the day ought to have done. When,
“ thirty years ago, Mr. Abernethy formed the
“ firm resolve of cutting open the walls of the
“ abdomen and seizing the external iliac artery,
“ he made a mighty step in advance, he formed
“ an epoch in the history of his profession.
“ John Hunter, upon reflecting on the hæmor-
“ rhage proceeding from the vessel below the
“ sac, after an operation in 1779, when Mr.
“ Broomfield, ‘ for security,’ had tied the artery
“ three or four inches above the aneurism,
“ had probably the first glimpse at his great
“ improvement of tying the artery in cases of
“ aneurism nearer the heart. His eminent
“ successor has extended the principles of the
“ illustrious Hunter.

“ So firmly impressed was Mr. Abernethy
“ with the certainty of ultimate success, that,

“nothing daunted by the unfortunate issue of
“his two first cases, he persevered, and at
“length successfully secured the external iliac
“artery. His steps have been followed by a
“host, till at length it needed but such a case
“as mine to add the finishing touch to his well-
“earned fame. In doing justice to the merits
“of such men we act but the part of prudence,
“since, if we do not, indignant posterity will.”

Paisley, January, 1826.

The following is Abernethy's reply to a communication from Mr. Tait on the subject, and couched in a tone just in relation to Mr. Hunter, modest and characteristic as regards himself.

TO DAVID TAIT, ESQ.,

SURGEON, PAISLEY.

Dear Sir,

I have read your interesting case in the “Edinburgh Journal,” but have no comments to offer. I have therefore only to thank you for the honourable mention you have made of

me. The progress of science had given us reason to confide in the anastomizing* channels for carrying on the circulation. The only question necessary to be decided was—would *large* arteries heal when tied? Every case confirmed that point, and therefore there was little merit in perseverance. Nevertheless, I feel grateful for your good opinion, and with congratulation and best wishes,

I am, dear Sir,

Your's very sincerely,

JOHN ABERNETHY.

Bedford Row, July 14,

Post Mark 1826.

The following portion of a note, necessarily mutilated from the suppression of professional matter, we copy as a written evidence of his not *in any way* appearing to alter or add to a treatment which he approved. It is written to a highly esteemed member of our profession, Mr. Beaman, of King Street, Covent Garden.

* The name applied to the collateral branches which carry on the circulation when the main artery of limb is tied or obstructed.

Mr. Beaman had sent a patient alone to Mr. Abernethy, who, having seen him, gave him the following note :

“ My dear Sir,

“ The patient says (here the symptoms referring to the point to be investigated are stated), and if this be true, I have no wish * * * * nor. can I suggest better treatment than that which you have adopted.

“ Yours very sincerely,

“ JOHN ABERNETHY.”

No date, post mark 1825.

The following letter to Mr. Wood of Rochdale reiterates his opinion on a very important disease, contraction of the gullet, or œsophagus, and conveys a practical truth which, if we may judge from the cases published in the periodicals, is just as necessary as ever. We allude to the too officious use of instruments in this affection, a lesson of Abernethy's, of the practical excellence of which Mr. Wood had convinced himself by his own experience, as we ourselves have on many occasions.

“ My dear Sir,

“ I think as you do with regard to the difficulty of swallowing. It seems likely to be the effect of irritability of the stomach, and if so, the passing of instruments, however soft and well-directed they may be, is not likely to be beneficial.

“ Indeed, I have seen so little good from such measures, that I should feel reluctance to employing them until impelled by stronger necessity than exists in the present case. Spasmodic affection in the part is, as you know, exceedingly common, and continues for a great many years without producing permanent contraction. With respect to the main object of the treatment of this case, I cannot say more than you are already acquainted with, and which is suggested at page 72.

“ I have of late been personally convinced of the benefit of the strictest attention to diet. Last summer my stomach was so disordered that it would not digest anything, and I was constantly tormented by the chemical changes which the food underwent in that organ. I had

scarcely any flesh on my bones, and sometimes every ten minutes was seized with rheumatic spasms, which were as general and severe as those of tetanus.* I went into the country, where I could get good milk and eggs, and lived upon three ounces of baked custard taken three times a day, drinking four hours after each meal some boiled water that had been poured upon a small quantity of ginger. Upon this quantity of food I regained my flesh, and uniformly got better as long as I continued this plan of diet, which was but for one month, for then I returned to town. From the very first day I had no more of these spasms. As for medical treatment, I repeat that I cannot say more than you already know. It gives me pleasure to find that you are settled to your satisfaction.

“ I remain,

“ My dear Sir,

“ Very sincerely yours,

“ JOHN ABERNETHY.”

Bedford Row, January 9.

* Locked-jaw.

CHAPTER X.

OF MANNER.

“ Non ego paucis,
Offendar maculis, quas aut incuria fudit,
Aut humana parum cavit natura.”

HORACE.

“ I will not be offended by a few blemishes, the result of inattention, or against which human frailty has not sufficiently guarded.”

MANKIND have long established, by universal consent, the great importance of manner. It has been so ably and so variously described by different writers, that it is next to impossible to say anything new on the subject, or what has not been even better said already. Still it is equally true that it is a subject very much less cultivated than its influence demands, so that really easy, good manners continue to be a very

rare and enviable possession. But if manners be thus influential in the ordinary intercourse of life, they are still more important in ministering to disease. People, when they are ill, have, for the wisest purposes, their susceptibilities more vivid, and it is happy for them when those in health have their sympathies, as is natural, we think, that they should be wakened up in proportion. No doubt it is a great subtraction from whatever benefit the most skilful can confer, if it be administered in a dry, cold, unfeeling, or otherwise repulsive manner. There is, too, a very sound physiological as well as moral reason for kindness. It is difficult to overrate the value of that calm, which is sometimes diffused over the whole system by the impression that there is an unaffected sympathy in our sufferings. We must of course in our time have observed abundant varieties of manner in our professional brethren, and we have often listened with interest to conversations in society in which the manners of various medical men have been the sub-

ject of discussion; from which good listeners might, we think, have often taken valuable lessons.

We are convinced that the disguise worn by some, of an artificial manner, leaves on many occasions no one more deceived than the wearer. Many patients have their perceptions remarkably quickened by indisposition, and will penetrate the thin veil of any form of affectation, much more readily than people imagine. In common language, good feeling and kind manner are said to spring from the heart. If a man feels kindly, he will rarely express himself otherwise, except under some momentary impulse of impatience or indisposition.

There is no doubt that the secret of a kind and conciliatory manner consists in the regulation of the feelings, and in carrying into the more trivial affairs of life that principle, which we acknowledge as indispensable in serious matters; of doing to others as we would they should do to us.

We are not speaking of a *polished* manner, that is another affair. A man's manner to a patient may be unpolished, or as homely as you please; but if he really feels a sympathy for his patient, it will with the exception to be stated, never be coarse or unkind.

Some men are absurdly pompous, others hard and cold, some put on a drawling maudlin tone which the most superficial observer detects as being affected. An honest sympathy is more acceptable than even a polished manner, though doubtless that is a very desirable grace to a learned profession.

In general, our own experience, and we know something of indisposition in our own person, has induced us to judge favourably of the manners of medical men.

There are, no doubt, exceptions, and sometimes in men in whom you would least expect it. We have known men "eye" a patient as if looking at some minute object; some jocosely familiar. One man has an absurd gravity, another thinks he must be all smiles. We have known, too, the adoption of a tone

interspersed with a religious solemnity. These when put on are generally detected, and of course always vulgar. Some even say really rude and unfeeling things before anything has happened to provoke them. We attended a gentleman who had a great deal of dry humour, and who was very amusing on such matters. One morning he said: "I saw Dr. — on one occasion, and the first thing he said to me I thought he might as well have omitted. 'I see, Sir,' said he, 'that you have taken the shine out of your constitution.'"

Abernethy's manner was at times, and in all serious cases, and so far as we ever observed, to hospital patients as unaffectedly kind as could be desired. It is too true that on many occasions of minor import, that impulsiveness of character which we have seen in the boy was still uncontrolled in the man, and led him to say things which however we may palliate, we shall not attempt to excuse.

It is true his roughness was very superficial, it was the easiest thing in the world to develop

the real kindness of heart which lay undoubtedly beneath it, and it is very instructive to observe how a very little yielding to an absurdity may occasionally obscure one of the most benevolent hearts that ever beat in a human breast, with the repulsive exterior of ungentle manners. Still patients could not be expected to know this, and therefore too many went away actually dissatisfied, if not disgusted.

The slightest reaction was in general sufficient to bring him to his self-possession. A lady whom he had seen on former occasions, was one day exceedingly hurt by his manner, and burst into tears. He immediately became as kind and patient as possible, and the lady came away just as pleased as she had been at first offended.

Reaction of a different kind would answer equally well. One day a gentleman consulted him on a painful affection of his shoulder, which had been of a very excruciating character. Before he had time to enter on his case, Abernethy said: "Well, I know nothing about it?" The

gentleman sharply retorted: "I do not know how you should, but if you will have patience till I tell you, perhaps you then may." Abernethy at once said, "Sit down," and heard him out with the greatest kindness and patience.

I am indebted to Thomas Chevasse, Esq., of Sutton Cold Field, Warwick, for the following letter to a patient in Surrey, who had complained that he did not receive any sympathy from him.

"Dear Sir,

"I am sorry to have said anything that has offended you. I may have felt annoyed that I could not suggest any plan of treatment more directly curative of your malady, and expressed myself pettishly when you did not seem to understand my meaning, for I am a fellow-sufferer, and had tried what are considered to be appropriate remedies, unavailingly. I assure you that I did not mean to hurt your feelings, and that I earnestly hope the state of your health

will gradually improve, and that your local maladies will decline in proportion.

“ I am, dear Sir,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ JOHN ABERNETHY.”

Bedford Row, October 25.

A surgeon was requested to visit a patient in one of the suburbs of the metropolis. When he arrived there, he had to mount two or three dilapidated steps, and to read a number which had been so nearly worn away, that he was enabled to determine if it was the number he sought, only by the more legible condition of its two neighbours. Having applied a very loose, dilapidated knocker, an old woman came to the door.

“ Does Captain —— live here ?”

“ Yes, Sir.”

“ Is he at home ?”

“ Yes, Sir. Please, Sir—may I be so bold—are you the doctor, Sir ?”

“ Yes.”

• “ Oh ! then, Sir, please to walk up.”

The surgeon went up a small, narrow staircase into a moderate-sized, dirty, ill-furnished room, the walls of which were coloured something between yellow and red, with a black border. An old man, in a very shabby and variegated *deshabille*, rose from his chair, and with a grace worthy of a court, welcomed the stranger. His manner was extremely gentlemanly, his language remarkably well-chosen, the statement of his complaint particularly simple and clear. The surgeon, who, like most of us, see strange things, was puzzled to make out his new patient ; but concluded he was one of the many who, having been born to better things, had been reduced, by some misfortune, to narrow circumstances. Everything seemed to suggest that construction, and to warrant no other. Accordingly, having prescribed, the surgeon was about to take his leave, when the old gentleman said :

“ Sir, I thank you very much for your attention !” at the same time offering his hand, with a fee.

This the surgeon declined, simply saying :

“No, I thank you, Sir. I hope you will soon be better. Good morning.”

“Stay, Sir,” said the old gentleman. “I shall insist on this, if you please,” in a tone which at once made the surgeon feel that it would be painful and improper to refuse. He accordingly took it. The old gentleman then said: “I am very much obliged to you, Sir; for had you not taken your fee, I could not have again had the advantage of your advice. I sent for you because I had understood that you were a pupil of Mr. Abernethy’s, for whom I could not send again, because he would not take his fee; and I was so hurt, that I am afraid I was almost rude to him. I suppose, judging from the appearance of things here that I could not afford it, he refused his fee, on which I begged him not to be deceived by appearances, but to take it. However, he kept retreating and declining it, until, forgetting myself a little, and feeling somewhat vexed, I said: ‘By G—, Sir, I insist on your taking it!’ when he replied: ‘By G—, Sir! I will not!’ and hastily leaving the room, closed the door after him.”

This gentleman has been dead some years. He lived to a very advanced age—nearly, if not quite ninety—and had many instructive points of character. He was really in very good circumstances, but he lived in a very humble manner, to enable him to assist very efficiently some poor relations. To do this, he saved all that he could; and although he insisted on the surgeon taking a fee when he visited him, said that he should not hesitate to accept his kindness when he called on the surgeon. The intercourse continued many years, but with rather a curious result.

After a time, growing infirmities converted what had been a visit—perhaps once or twice a-year—into occasional attendances, when the rule he had prescribed to himself of paying visits at home became characterised by very numerous exceptions; and at last, by so many, that the rule and the exception changed places. The surgeon, however, went on, thinking that the patient could not do other without disturbing existing arrangements. When, however, the old gentleman died, about four hundred guineas were

found in his boxes, wrapped up; and in various sums, strongly suggestive of their having been (under the influence of a propensity too common in advancing life) savings from the somewhat unnecessary forbearance of his medical attendant. We know one other very similar occurrence.

Sometimes Mr. Abernethy would meet with a patient who would afford a useful lesson. A lady, the wife of a very distinguished musician, consulted him, and finding him uncourteous, said: "I had heard of your rudeness before I came, Sir, but I did not expect this." When Abernethy gave her the prescription, she said: "What am I to do with this?"

"Anything you like. Put it in the fire, if you please."

The lady took him at his word—laid his fee on the table, and threw the prescription into the fire, and hastily left the room. Abernethy followed her into the hall, pressing her to take back her fee or to let him give her another prescription; but the lady was inexorable, and left the house.

The foregoing is well-authenticated, Mr. Stowe knows the lady well, who is still living ; but many of these stories, to our own knowledge, were greatly exaggerated. Abernethy would sometimes offend not so much by the manner as by the matter ; by saying what were very salutary but very unpleasant truths, and of which the patient perhaps only felt the sting. We know a gentleman, an old fox-hunter, who abused Abernethy roundly ; but all that he could say against him was : “ Why, Sir, almost the moment I entered the room, he said : ‘ I perceive you drink a good deal,’ (which was very true). Now,” added the patient, very *naïvely*, “ suppose I did, what the devil was that to him !”

Another gentleman of considerable literary reputation, but who, as regarded drinking, was not intemperate, had a most unfortunate appearance on his nose, exactly like that which accompanies dram-drinking. This gentleman used to be exceedingly irate against Abernethy, although all I could gather from him amounted to nothing more than this, that when he said his

stomach was out of order, Abernethy said: "Aye, I see that by your nose," or some equivalent expression.

However rough Abernethy could occasionally be, there was, on grave occasions, no feature of his character more striking than his humanity. Dr. Barnet had a case where Abernethy was about to perform a severe operation. Dr. B., at that time a young man, was very anxious to have everything duly prepared, and had been very careful. When Abernethy arrived, he went into the room in which the patient was to be brought, and looking on the instruments, &c. on the table, said: "Aye, yes, that is all right;" then, pausing for a moment, he said, "No, there is one thing you have forgotten;" and then throwing a napkin over the instruments, added, "it is bad enough for the poor patient to have to undergo an operation, without being obliged to see these terrible instruments."

Few people get off so badly in the world as poor gentlemen. There are multifarious provisions in this kingdom for all sorts of claimants, but a poor gentleman slips down between those

which are not applicable to his case, and those which are too repulsive to be practicable. His sensibilities remain, nay, perhaps are sharpened, and thus tend to increase his wants, and the difficulty of supplying them. There is here afforded a grateful opportunity for the indulgence of what we believe, amidst some exceptions, to be the ruling spirit of medical men; a sensitive philanthropy which no men in the world are more liberal in disbursing. Abernethy had his full share of this excellence. There are multitudes of instances exemplifying it; we give one for which we are obliged to Mr. Brown, of the respected firm of Longman and Co. Abernethy was just stepping into his carriage to go and see the Duke of —, to whom he had been sent for in a hurry; when a gentleman stopped him to say that he should be very glad if he could, at his leisure, pay Mr. — another visit at Somers Town. Abernethy had seen this poor gentleman before, and advised a course which it appeared that the patient had not resolution to follow. “Why,” said Aber-

nethy, "I can't go now, I am going in haste to see the Duke of ——." Then pausing a moment before he stepped into the carriage, he looked up to the coachman and said quietly, "Somers Town." This is very characteristic. The fidgetty irritability of his first impression at interference, and the beneficence of his second thought.

Dr. Thomas Rees knew a gentleman who was a man of ability, who had been a long time ill, and who got a scanty living by his writings. Dr. Rees called on Abernethy one morning, and told him that the gentleman wished very much for his opinion; but that he had heard such accounts of him, he was half afraid to see him. "And if he were not," said Dr. Rees, "he is not able to pay you. He is a great sufferer, and he gets his living by working his brains." "Ah! said Abernethy, "where does he live, do you say?" "At ——," mentioning a place full two miles distant. Abernethy immediately rang the bell, ordered his carriage, visited the gentleman, and was most kind to him.

One day a pupil wished to consult him, and found him about ten minutes before lecture in the museum, looking over his preparations for lecture—rather a dangerous time we should have said for consultation. “I am afraid, Sir,” said the pupil, “that I have a polypus in my nose, and I want you to look at it.” No answer; but when he had sorted his preparations, he said: “Eh? What!” The pupil repeated his request. “Then stand upon your head; don’t you see that all the light here comes from a skylight? How am I to look up your nose? Where do you live?” “Bartholomew Close.” “What time do you get up?” “At eight.” “That can’t be then.” “What, Sir?” “You cannot be at Bedford Row at nine.” “Yes, Sir, I will.” “To-morrow morning, then.” The pupil was punctual. Mr. Abernethy made a most careful examination of his nose, entered into the causes and nature of polypi, assured him that there was nothing of the sort, and exacted from him a promise that he would never look into his nose again. The gentleman, in his letter to me, adds: “This

I have never done, and I am happy to say that there has never been anything the matter."

He was, indeed, as it appeared to us, most liberal in the mode of conducting his practice. When asked by a patient, when he desired to see them again, it was at the longest period compatible with a reasonable observation of the case; and we doubt whether he ever took a fee where he had even a *doubt* as to the circumstances of the patient justifying his so doing. It would be easy to multiply examples of this, but it would be a constructive injustice to our profession to appear to bring things out in high relief, or as special excellences which (notwithstanding some exceptions) from our hearts we believe, to be a prevailing characteristic of the profession.

Abernethy had nearly all his life, without being improvident, been habitually careless of money; and although he left his family with a comfortable competency, which very properly left their position unaltered by his death, yet we doubt if ever any man with the opportunity

of making so much, availed himself of that opportunity so little.

It had become the fashion in Abernethy's latter days to speak lightly of him as an operator; and we have very little desire to rest any portion of his reputation on this branch of our duty. Nevertheless, when we first knew Abernethy, if we had had to be the subject of an operation, we knew no man to whom we should have submitted with the same confidence. He was considerate and humane, he did as he would be done by, and we have seen him perform those operations which are usually regarded as the most difficult, as well as ever we have seen them performed by anybody; and without any of that display or effect too often observed, and which is equally misplaced and disgusting.

His benevolent disposition led him to feel a great deal in regard to operations. Like Cheselden and Hunter, he regarded them, as in a scientific sense they truly are, the reproach of the profession; since, with the exception of such as become necessary from accidents, they are

almost all of them consequent on the imperfection of Surgery as a science.

Highly impulsive, Abernethy could not at all times prevent the expression of his feelings, when perhaps his humanity was most earnestly engaged in the suppression of them. It was usually an additional trial to him when a patient bore pain with fortitude.

One day he was performing rather a severe operation on a woman. He had, before commencing, said a few words of encouragement, as was usual with him, and the patient was bearing the operation with great fortitude. After suffering some seconds, she very earnestly but firmly said, "I hope, Sir, it will not be long." "No, indeed," earnestly replied Abernethy, "that would be too horrible."

In fact, he held operations altogether as occupying so low a place in our duties, and as having so little to do with the science of our profession, that there was very little in most of them to set against that repulsion which both his science and his humanity suggested.

As he advanced in life, his dislike to opera-

tions increased. He was apt to be fidgetty and impatient. If things went smoothly, it was all very well, but if any untoward occurrence took place he suffered a good deal, and it became unpleasant to assist him, but he was never unkind to the patient. It is, however, not always easy to estimate correctly the amount of operative dexterity. Hardly any man will perform a dozen operations in the same manner. We have seen a very bungling operator occasionally perform an operation extremely well, whilst the very worst operation we ever saw was performed by a man whose fame rested almost entirely on his dexterity, and what made it the more startling, was that it was nothing more than taking up the femoral artery. But whether it were that he was not well, or had been careless in the site of his first incision, or in opening the sheath of the vessels before he passed his ligature, or all of these causes in conjunction, we could not tell, because we were not quite near enough, but we never witnessed a more clumsy affair.

The conditions calculated to ensure good

operating are few and simple, there are both *moral* and medical conditions, but no familiarity ever enables a surgeon on any occasion *safely* to dispense with any of them. When they are all observed, operating usually becomes steady and uniform, when *any* of them are dispensed with or wanting, there is always risk of error and confusion.

We are afraid that we should be hardly excused, in a work of this kind, were we to lay down the canons to which we allude. We must therefore, at present, not enter further into the subject.

We must find space for a few remarks on the causes of Abernethy's occasional irritability, but we must not omit to mention a hoax that was played on him. He had been in particularly good spirits, as hilarious as a boy, and had proposed going to the theatre, where he had enjoyed himself very much. On reaching home, there was a message desiring his attendance at Harrow. This was a very unwelcome finale. The hoax had been clumsily managed, but it did not strike anybody

at the moment, so it was decided that Mr. Abernethy must go, and he took Mr. Skey with him. When they got to Harrow, they drove to the house of the surgeon, and knocking him up, the surgeon came to the window in his night-cap, when the following dialogue began. The name of the patient we shall suppose to be Wilson.

“Does Mr. Wilson live here?”

“Who are you?”

“I say, then, is Mr. Wilson living here?”

“I say what do you want? who the d—l are you?”

“I say that I want to find a Mr. Wilson; and my name is Abernethy.”

Immediately, says Mr. Skey, off flew the night-cap.

“I beg your pardon, Mr. Abernethy; what can I do for you,” &c.

“Is there a Mr. Wilson living here; and has he broken his leg?”

“Oh, yes, Sir, he is living here, but he is very well, and has not met with anything of the kind.”

Abernethy laughed heartily, and ordered the post-boy to drive him home again.

There would be no difficulty in multiplying anecdotes given to Abernethy ; but there are some objections to such a course. In the first place there are many told of him which never happened ; others which may probably have happened, you find it impossible to authenticate ; and lastly there is a third class which if they happened to Abernethy, certainly happened to others before Abernethy was born. In fact when a man once gets a reputation of doing or saying odd things, every story in which the chief person is unknown or unremembered is given to the man whose reputation in this way is most remarkable. We need not say how impossible it is in a memoir of this kind to introduce with propriety matter thus apocryphal.

We have no doubt that with a most benevolent disposition, Abernethy's manner, particularly as he advanced in years, evinced great irritability ; and we believe that it was the result of two or three different causes, which in their combined influence got a mastery which the

utmost resolution was not at all times able to control. It had formed the subject of numerous conversations between Abernethy and some of his most intimate friends, and we believe had arisen, and been unconsciously fostered by the following causes: "In early life he had been," as he told Dr. Thomas Rees, "particularly disgusted with the manner in which he had seen patients caressed and "humbugged" by smooth and flattering modes of proceeding, and that he had early resolved to avoid that at all events." He further observed: "I tried to learn my profession, and thinking I could teach it, I educated myself to do so; but as for private practice, of course I am obliged to do that too." We can easily understand, how in a sensitive mind an anxiety to avoid an imputation of one kind might have led to an opposite extreme; and thus a negligence of ordinary courtesy might have taken the place of a disgusting assentation.

No doubt, however, a temper naturally impulsive, would find in the perplexities which occasionally beset the practice of our profession, too many occasions when the suggestions of

spirit, which, though not always unwelcome to ruffled temper, and those of fear of improper assentation would unfortunately coincide; and thus lead to intermix and confound the observance of a praiseworthy caution, with a yielding to an insidious habit. If to this were now added that increase of irritability which a disturbed and fidgetty state of physique never fails to furnish, and from which Abernethy greatly suffered, the habit would soon become dominant; and thus an originally good motive, left unguarded, be supplanted by an uncontrolled impulse. We believe this to have been the short explanation of Abernethy's manner; all we know of him seems to admit of this explanation. It was a habit, and required nothing but a check from his humanity or his good sense to correct it; but then this was just that which patients were not likely to know, and could have been still less expected to elicit.

Again, most men so celebrated are sure to be more or less spoilt. They become themselves insensibly influenced by that assentation which they have so justly despised in others. The moral

seems to be, that the impulses of the most benevolent heart may be obscured or frustrated by an irritable temper ; that habits the most faulty may rise from motives which in their origin were pure or praiseworthy ; that it is the character of vice to tempt us by small beginnings ; that, knowing her own deformity, she seldom fails to recommend herself as the representative, and too often to assume the garb of virtue ; that the most just and benevolent are not safe, unless habitual self-government preside over the dictates of the intellect and the heart, and that the *impulse* to which *assent* is yielded to-day may exert the influence of a command to-morrow ; that, in fact, we must be masters or slaves.

“ Rege animum qui nisi paret
Imperat.”

When the editors of the medical periodicals first began to publish the lectures given at the different hospitals, there was considerable discussion as to the propriety of so doing. The press, of course, defended its own views, in a

spirit which, though not always unwelcome to readers, is frequently "wormwood" to the parties to whom the press may be opposed.

We are not lawyers, and therefore have no claim to an opinion, we suppose, on the right; but as regards the general effect of this custom as now practised, we are afraid that, however advantageous it may be to the trade to obtain gratuitously these bulky contributions to their columns, we have serious doubts if it be any advantage to science, or to the character of our periodical literature.

The publicity which it gives to a man's name induces men to contribute matter, which it would often have been, perhaps, more advantageous to them to have suppressed; and the proprietors, so long as a periodical "pays" are not likely to quarrel with that which they get for nothing but the expense of publication.

Mr. Abernethy was very much opposed to the publication of his lectures; but, though not insensible by any means to the occasionally caustic remarks of the press, does not seem to have been much annoyed by them.

The following is an extract from a letter, in which he expresses himself as opposed to the conduct of those who publish lectures without the permission of the authors. We suppress that part, because it involves his opinion of the conduct of individuals. As regards his personal feelings he says:

“Though I have been so long in replying
“to your letter, I have felt very grateful for the
“kindness which induced you to take up the
“cudgels in my behalf. At the same time I
“must say that had I been at your elbow, I
“should have hinted to you, that the object was
“not worth the trouble you have been so good
“as to bestow upon it. No one can expect to
“escape slander and misrepresentation, and
“these are so commonly bestowed upon all,
“that they have little or no influence on the
“minds of persons of character and judgment.

“With many thanks and best wishes,

“I remain, my dear Sir,

“Yours very sincerely,

“JOHN ABERNETHY.”

SECTION.

When Mr. Abernethy was appointed *surgeon* to St. Bartholomew's Hospital in 1815, he had already been twenty-eight years assistant-surgeon, and was therefore fifty years of age before he had an opportunity of taking an active share in the practical administration of the Hospital. This is one of the many effects of a system of which we shall presently give a sketch. He was therefore invested with the additional duties of Surgeon to the Hospital, and Professor to the College of Surgeons at a time of life when most people who have commenced young and laboured hard with their intellects, as distinguished from their hands, begin to feel their work. This was the case with Abernethy. We do not think that his original physical organization was to be complained of; he had been active and energetic, he was of moderate stature and well-proportioned, a magnificently-poised brain, judging phrenologically, and, in short, under favourable circumstances, apparently had the elements of long life; but we think that his organization, and especially the presiding

power, the nervous system, was ill-adapted either for the air, the anxieties, or the habits of a crowded city, or the somewhat pestilential atmosphere of a dissecting-room.

We saw him, therefore, ageing at 'fifty very sensibly, and rather more than is in general observable at that period. He complained in 1817, of the fatigue of the College lectures, coming as they did on the completion of a season of the "mill-round of hospital tuition and practice." So that when we mentioned the period of his lectures at the College as on so many accounts the zenith of his career, there was the serious drawback arising from a certain diminution of strength, which had never been at best, equal to the *physical* fatigue of his multiform avocations. All this arose partly out of a system which, although like all errors not allowed to proceed without being charged with elements of remotely prospective correction, has been the parent of much mischief. This is what we have called the "hospital system," some of the more important features of which we must now present to our readers.

CHAPTER XI.

THE HOSPITAL SYSTEM.

“ — Non hæc sine numine Divum.
Eveniunt.”

ÆNEID, LIB. II, L. 777.

IF we would view any human institution dispassionately, we must distinguish the vices of system from the faults of those who administer it.

Trite as this remark may be, it is just one which is too frequently overlooked or unobserved. By a careful attention to the distinction it implies, we may develop the elements of rational reform, as contrasted with Utopian schemes, which, whatever of abstract truth

they may contain, are useless, simply because they are impracticable. We cannot effect any material change in human nature by any summary legislation, nor prevent the obtrusive necessities of daily life from bringing down the soaring aspirations of mind to the humble level of the practicabilities of matter. Whoever, therefore, expects that any body of men, invested with irresponsible power, will hesitate to exercise it so as to procure, as they believe, the maximum of advantage to themselves, might just as hopefully quarrel with the negro on account of his complexion. Do what you may, Man is Man "for a' that;" but whilst it is necessary to remember this, it is by no means so to do it in a spirit of unkindness or hostility, not in any sense opposed to brotherly love; but, on the contrary, to promote universal harmony and good feeling by removing the temptations which experience has shown to be influential in disturbing such relations.

Neither should we quarrel with a man who endeavours to do the best he can for his family and friends. Should he even in this pursuit

compromise his duty to the public, it is very possible that the objects which he had in view may have been in themselves praiseworthy, and therefore, instead of exasperating our blame, may readily extenuate, faults which it may be impossible entirely to excuse.

The truth is that the interest of the public and of individuals is seldom if ever incompatible; the occasions on which they appear to be so are not unfrequent, those in which they really clash are extremely rare.

Wherever circumstances occur in which the temptation of a present fruition is found habitually to lead men to courses, which, however apparently promotive of their own interest, are really injurious to those of the public; it becomes very necessary that the public should impose some safeguards against such an injurious exercise of power.

The hospitals of London as we have formerly observed are in the main very fine institutions. They are many of them very wealthy, which generally means powerful also.

The governors, as they are termed, consist of

certain noblemen and gentlemen, the latter being for the most part drawn from the more wealthy sections of the mercantile and trading classes of society.

The knowledge possessed by these gentlemen of the requisitions of a large public hospital must (special instances excepted) be very measured; and be in the main derived from the medical officers with whom they are associated.

It thus happens that the administration of the hospital is in great part confided, as with some restrictions it ought to be, to the medical officers. The interests of these gentlemen it may be assumed would be best promoted by carrying out in the most efficient manner the benevolent objects of the institution, and we believe looked at fairly and comprehensively, this would be really the case. The duties of a large hospital, however, if they are to be performed conscientiously, require much time, not a little labour, and some health to boot. Now all these in a crowded community are very costly articles; and which must in justice, and what is material,

in fact too, be fairly remunerated. The public never really pay so dearly, as when they appear to get labour for nothing.

Here we come to the first defect in the "Hospital System."

It might be supposed that with ample means the hospitals, by adopting such tests as were in their power, would have secured the most efficient officers, by paying them remunerative salaries; and having retained them as long as their services were deemed efficient, or the length of them justified, by relieving them from the necessity of further exertion by a retiring pension? No such thing. The hospital gives nothing; actually, there is a small nominal retaining fee as it were, of about £60 a year, and the medical officer is left to obtain his remuneration for time, trouble, and health, by such private practice, as his reputation, or the *prestige* of being attached to an hospital may afford, from fees from pupils, or such other means as the position he occupies may place within his power.

He very naturally sets to work to do the

best he can, and from this first budding, we very soon arrive at the full blossom of the system ; one effect of which is, that, in hospitals which have so large a care of the public health, —institutions which, whether correctly or incorrectly give so much of the tone to the medical opinions of the day, which exert either directly or indirectly an influence on the claims of hundreds to public confidence ; that in these hospitals there is not one single surgeoncy that is fairly and *bond fide* open to scientific competition.

Let us now examine a little into the machinery by which these results are brought out.

The experience afforded by the hospitals, necessarily supplies abundant means of instructing students in surgery. They are accordingly admitted on paying certain fees to the surgeon, and this at once supplies a large revenue. This revenue is of course regulated by the number of pupils, and there are in London many hospitals, so of course there is an active competition. Thus some time before the season commences, the adver-

tisements of the medical schools occupy a considerable space in the Times newspaper and circulars, are also liberally distributed.

Well, the points here as in all other cases, are the advantages offered and the price paid—the maximum and minimum respectively. Now here there are some elements of evil.

Students are not always, and before they try it, hardly ever judges of a school. The general reputation of a man as he is never subjected to competition, is no test whatever of his comparative power in *teaching* students; but they are accustomed to ascribe great importance to operations, and, *cæteris paribus*, they incline to prefer that hospital where the greatest number of them are supposed to be performed.

This arises from various causes, in some of which the public play no unimportant part. The student has perhaps seen in the country a good deal of medical and surgical practice, but very few operations. His stay in London is comparatively short, averaging perhaps not more than the better part of two years; unnecessary length

of time is generally inconvenient, always expensive, and the student is naturally anxious to see most of that which he will have least opportunity of observing elsewhere. Moreover, he knows that when he returns to the country he may save twenty limbs before he obtains the same amount of *reputation* that he may possibly get by *one amputation*.

The ignorance of the public here, not appreciating results which very probably involved the exercise of the highest talent, whilst they are ready to confer a very profitable distinction on that which does not necessarily, involve any talent at all. We have no wish whatever, and certainly there is no necessity for straining any point in reference to this very serious matter: but these two facts are indisputable; that the surgeons obtain their remuneration from the hospitals by the fees they obtain from the pupils; and *cæteris paribus* the pupils will flock the thickest where they expect to see most operations.

The next thing that we would submit, is that the *prestige* in favour of operations is both

directly and indirectly opposed to the progress of scientific surgery. Almost all operations commonly so termed, are examples of defective science. To practical common sense therefore it would appear a very infelicitous mode of obtaining the maximum of a man's genius in aid of the diminution of operations, to open to him a prospect of enriching himself by the multiplication of them. We desire to consider the subject with reference to its scientific bearings only, and would avoid entirely, were that possible, any appeal merely to the feelings. Such impulses however right, are apt to be paroxysmal and uncertain unless supported by the intellect. But on such a subject the feelings must necessarily become more or less interested. Wherever a system takes a wrong direction, a great many minor evils insensibly grow out of it.

The erection of a theatre for the purpose of operating, though founded on a feasible pretext, is a very questionable measure, and, unless of clear advantage to the profession or the public, is surely not without some character of repul-

sion. As regards art or science, it is certain that not more than twenty or thirty can be near enough in the theatre to see anything that can be really instructive in the performance of operations. Whilst, in the absence of actual advantages, an exhibition of this kind is more calculated to give publicity to the surgeon operating, than it is to raise the tone or chasten the feelings of men about to enter a profession which almost daily establishes requisitions for our highest faculties; operations without opportunities of real instruction are merely unprofitable expenditure of valuable time. Besides, that which is viewed as a sort of exhibition to-day, may be with difficulty regarded in the light of a serious duty to-morrow. Were the object to tax the sensibility of a student, and blind him to any higher association with pain and suffering than that afforded by custom and chloroform; and to replace a dignified self-possession and sympathy with suffering, which each kept the other in due control by an indifference to every thing save adroitness of manipulation and mechanical dis-

play. No machinery could be better calculated to effect such objects; but science and humanity require very different qualifications, and experience has shown that they are neither incompatible nor beyond our power.

The humanity and science that beholds in operative surgery, the lowest of our employments, and which would thus be impelled to seek, and as experience has taught us to seek successfully, to diminish the number of such exhibitions, and to lessen the suffering of those which are still retained, is perfectly compatible with coolness and skill in the performance of them.

When we speak of lessening pain, we must not be understood as alluding to chloroform or agencies of that kind. We have, on the contrary, the greatest distrust of their utility; we do not hesitate to admit the propriety of their use in certain cases, but we are satisfied that, as at present employed, a very few years will make a great change. Many a so-called incurable case has been shown to be curable by the hesitation of the patient to submit to an

operation. We have published some ourselves, wherein we joined in recommending the measure which the patient declined. Many deaths that we *do know* have already occurred from the use of chloroform; and a *significant* remark was made by a man who had considerable reputation in this way. He said: "Chloroform is a good thing for operating surgeons." To return from this digression.

The most distinguished surgeons ever produced in this country have exemplified the qualities I have mentioned in the highest degree. I must mention two more particularly, Cheselden and John Hunter; the former, the most expert and successful of his day, in the European sense of the word, has left us a satisfactory declaration on this subject. Cheselden acknowledges that he seldom slept much the night previous to the day on which he had any important operation; but that, once engaged in operating he was always firm, and his hand never trembled. John Hunter was not only a good operator himself, but he deduced from observation one of the greatest

improvements in operative surgery. His discovery had all the elements of improvement that are possible in this branch of the profession.

An operation which had been founded upon erroneous views of the nature and relations of the parts affected — which had been always tedious and painful in performance — which, whether successful or not, entailed much subsequent suffering, which in its results was highly dangerous, and which was very commonly followed by the loss of the limb or life; was replaced by one founded on more correct views of the disease, easy and simple in its execution, occupying not more than a very few minutes, and which, so far as regards the purpose for which it was instituted, and to which it should be restricted, is almost invariably successful. If it be performed under circumstances implying conditions *contrary to those on which Mr. Hunter's operation was founded*, very different results have no doubt taken place; but when properly applied, his operation for aneurism

is no doubt one of the greatest in operative surgery.

John Hunter treats of operations in terms which show how low he rated that part of our duties. He speaks of them as humiliating examples of the imperfection of our science, and figures to himself an operator under the repulsive symbol of an armed savage.* The truth is that operations, to be performed properly, must be properly studied. They must be frequently performed on the dead, and afterwards carefully examined. There is a wide difference between neglecting a necessary study and making that the test of science, which is the most emphatic proof of its imperfection. We have no lack of experience in this branch of the profession, and have included not a few operations which are too commonly delivered over to

* He says: "No Surgeon should approach the
"victim of his operation without a sacred dread and
"reluctance, and should be superior to that popular
"éclat generally attending painful operations, often only
"because they are so, or because they are expensive to
"the patient."—P. 210.

men who are said to devote themselves to special objects; and we are satisfied in entertaining the views which the most distinguished men have held on this subject; whilst we are persuaded that few things have contributed more to impede the progress of science than the *abuse* of operations.

To return to the hospitals.

The positions which had at first been left without any remuneration, become by the described machinery very lucrative, directly, by the fees paid by the pupils; and indirectly, in some cases, by keeping the surgeon constantly before the public. Any *prestige*, therefore, in obtaining these appointments, is of great value, but if that do not really involve *professional excellence*, it is as plain as possible that the public may be very badly served, and an evil generated equally opposed to the interests of science and humanity. It is obvious that the only legitimate grounds of eligibility are moral and professional superiority, as determined by the test adopted at public schools and universities—namely, public competition. Now

what are the tests employed? Without meaning to insinuate that moral or professional eligibility is *wholly* disregarded—no system in these days will support that—still the eligibility depends on a qualification which few would beforehand have imagined. It is certainly something better than Mr. Macaulay's joke in relation to the proposed franchise to the Militia—namely, that the elector should be five feet two; but something not much more elevated—namely, that a bounty should have been paid to one of the hospital surgeons in the shape of an apprentice fee; thus making the holding one of the most responsible offices in the profession—a condition which absolutely ignores relative eligibility of skill, steadiness, assiduity, and humanity; and which recognizes them only in such shape, that the possession of office is practically made to depend on a point absolutely extrinsic to any one important requisition, recognized by the public or the profession.

We need not insist on the tendency of this system to the protection of idleness and in-

capacity, or the injustice inseparable from it to the young gentlemen whose interests it is supposed to guard. One necessary consequence is obvious—namely, that the hospitals, instead of having to select from the general body of pupils, or from the more industrious or talented of them, is obliged to choose from a very small minority.

It is, in fact, just as if scholarships and fellowships at public schools and universities were conferred without any reference to the proofs which the candidates might have given of their talents or industry; but were determined by their having given a certain fee to a particular professor. Would any man in his senses doubt as to the influence of such a plan on the interests of classical literature or mathematical science? It seems to us impossible that men should really differ on that point, or hesitate to admit that, *mutatis mutandis*, whatever the science might be, so far as the cultivation of it could be influenced by system, the result must be alike prejudicial in all cases. We are,

however, far from arriving at the end of the system by this general statement.

The public and the government, uninformed or unmindful of this "system," wish to consult authorities on professional matters. They not unnaturally look to those who hold public appointments, because these afford the *prestige* of extensive opportunity which is supposed to imply, and under a fair system would ensure, skill and experience. Men are apt to look at a man's position without stopping to inquire *how* it was obtained, and although position may in particular instances cut both ways, and in particular instances "throw a cruel sunshine" over incapacity, still amongst gentlemen extreme cases are not to be expected; the rule is much more likely to be a respectable and protected mediocrity, which is just that tone which has rarely done anything to enlarge the boundaries of any kind of knowledge.

It happens, however, from the "system," and the position thus given to those who are supposed to profit by it, that the interests of the

poor, and, in a considerable degree, those of the rich also, are to a very large sense, confided to their care.

It thus follows that positions, in themselves highly desirable, and which enable men to exert considerable influence on the progress of a science, on the sound condition of which the physical comforts, and, in no small degree, the moral condition of mankind depends, are occupied by men who have undergone none of those tests which public competition alone affords, and which the *summi honores* of almost every other profession either directly or indirectly imply. So far for one mode in which the interests of the public are concerned, but there are many other channels. The government ignoring the influences of this system have placed the regulation of the surgical branch of the profession in the hands of a body of men whom, when we examine, we find to be no other than the apprentices we had recognized at the hospital, grown into the full bloom of a legislative body—whence again are

chosen presidents, vice-presidents, examiners, &c., of the College of Surgeons !

If, fatigued with this machinery, we walk to the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society—a chartered body for the especial cultivation of science—we meet, as its name would imply, a number of our honoured brothers, the physicians ; but here we find that, whether we observe Presidents or any other Officers, the influence exerted by the apprentice system continues ; and that in *almost* everything surgical, the *best possible* individual is an apprentice who has attained his first position without any public competition. We hope and believe that the point of the wedge is already inserted which will, at no distant period, rend asunder this system, which we shall not trust ourselves by attempting to characterize farther. But there are points in connection with the interests of science and of Abernethy which require yet to be noticed.

We need scarcely observe that it would be very desirable that the interests of the science

should be entrusted to those who had shown most assiduity or talent in the cultivation of them ; that if operative surgery be really, as a whole, a series of facts exemplifying the defects of a science—that whilst every pains should be taken that what is necessary should be done thoroughly well, all factitious inducement, to multiply their number should be avoided, and especially any which tended to increase emolument commensurately with their multiplication.

That as operations (with some few exceptions) merely minister to effects, their real bearings on disease can only be estimated by knowing the *ultimate result* of the case ; and that, in order to this effect, returns of all operations should be kept, with full accounts of the case ; the addresses of the patients should also be taken, and such means as were obvious and practicable employed to obtain the *ultimate result* of the case.

Another point which should be attended to in hospitals, is an accurate notation and return of all cases whatever, so that we might obtain from statistical records whatever light they might be capable of affording in aid of the prosecution

of a definite science. In this return, a full history, and *all* the phenomena of the case which are known to have an influence on the body, should be accurately noted, and in tabular forms convenient for reference.

The defects of the hospitals in this respect are too well known to require comment, and we think the profession indebted to Dr. Webster for the exertions he has made to draw attention to this subject. In no respect are the hospitals more defective than as regards the division of labour. To supply the requisitions of a yet dawning science, there is too much confided to one surgeon, for at present the practical administration and the scientific investigation should be confided to the same hand. If more be entrusted to one man than can be performed without great labour, and the greater labour be voluntary, we shall have little chance of obtaining that full and accurate notation of facts, which all cases furnish more or less the means of obtaining, and without which the evolution of the maximum of human ability is absolutely impossible. It seems to us also an imperative duty to avail ourselves

of the experience afforded by the history of other sciences, in the cultivation of our own.

All sciences have been in as bad a condition, or worse, than medicine and surgery; all sciences have progressed immediately that they were investigated on a rational plan—a plan, which, simply stated, is little more than the bringing together *all the facts* that can be perceived to bear any relation to the inquiry, and reasoning on them according to *well-established* and necessary conditions. If this be the case, and this plan have never been applied to the investigation of medical science, we know not how those, who are placed in positions which supply the necessary means can be excused; or how we can halt between condemning the system under which such a flagitious neglect of the claims of science and mankind is exemplified. It is true, when we arrive at the acme of our convictions of the effects of such a system, our reflections remind us that such things are “permitted,” and that ultimately they will work for good; that man is not destined to interfere with the ultimate plan

and designs of Providence, however he may be allowed to place his intellect under the direction of a responsible volition, and to discover the path to the temple of truth, only after having fruitlessly threaded the mazes of error and conjecture.

CHAPTER XII.

“ *Quanto quisque sibi plura negaverit
Ab Dis plura feret.*”

WE believe that there is no greater fallacy than that which supposes that private advantage can be promoted at the expense of the public good. We are very well disposed to believe that selfish people are the very worst caterers for the real interests of the idol they worship. The more we consider the Hospital system, the more reason shall we find to distrust it; and we by no means exclude that very point wherein it is supposed to be most successful—namely, in securing the pecuniary advantage of those whose interests it is supposed to guard.

Of the apprentices, we shall say little more than to express our belief that many of them have lived to obtain the conviction, that they would have done much better had they not been fed by hopes that were never realized. All apprentices cannot, of course, be surgeons. Again, if, in the course of a century, a solitary instance or two should occur of the success of an unapprenticed candidate, they not unnaturally feel it as an injustice in thus being deprived of that, the special eligibility to which was a plea for the exaction of a large apprentice fee. But to the surgeons themselves, it seems to us that the system is far from realizing the benefits that its manifold evils are supposed to secure. The adage that "curses, like chickens, come home to roost," is far from inapplicable. After all, many of the hospital surgeons are little known; and the public inference with regard to men invested with such splendid opportunities of distinguishing themselves, is not always very flattering. Mr. Abernethy, so far from benefiting from the system, appears to us to have suffered from it in every way.

His talents, both natural and acquired, would have given him everything to hope and nothing to fear from the severest competition ; whilst the positive effects of the system were such as to deprive him of what was justly his due, and to embitter a retirement which, in the barest justice, should have been graced by everything that could add to his peace, his honour, or his happiness, from the Institution whose character he had exalted and maintained, and whose school he had founded.

But let us look at the facts. The system which pronounces that there shall be three surgeons to attend to some 500 or 600 patients (*for the purposes of science*, the next thing to an impossibility), kept Abernethy twenty-eight years an assistant-surgeon ; during this time he was filling the hospital with students, to the amount of sums varying from £2000 to £3000 a year, of which in the said twenty-eight years, he never received one farthing.

He saw from time to time men, of whose capacities we know he had the highest opinion, shut out from the hospital by the mere circum-

stance of their not being apprentices ; and two of these were the late Professor Macartney of Dublin, and the present distinguished Professor of Comparative Anatomy, Professor Owen. And here we must pause to record one of our numerous obligations to the perceptivity and justice of Abernethy. We have formerly observed that at the very commencement of life he had been accustomed to inculcate the importance of studying comparative anatomy and physiology, in order to obtain clear views of the functions of man ; but all arrangements made with this view, from the time of Mr. Hunter onwards, though varying in degree, still were inefficient. It was next to an impossibility to combine an availing pursuit of a science which combines an inquiry into the structure and functions of the whole animal kingdom, with the daily exigencies of an anxious profession.

When Mr. Owen had completed his education, his thoughts were directed to a surgeoncy in the navy, as combining a professional appointment with the possibility of pursuing,

with increased opportunities of observation, his favourite study. Fortunately for science, he went to Abernethy, who requested him to pause. He said, "You know the hospital will not have any but apprentices. Macartney left on that account. Stay," said he, "and allow me to think the matter over." This resulted in his proposing to the council of the College of Surgeons that there should be a *permanent* Professor of Comparative Anatomy, and that the appointment should be given to Mr. Owen.

This is among the many proofs of Abernethy's perception of character. Mr. Owen had dissected for lecture; and Abernethy saw, or thought, he saw, a peculiar aptitude for more general and enlarged anatomical investigation. The whole world now knows how nobly the Professor has justified the hopes of his talented master. It would be out of place for us to attempt a compliment to a man so distinguished in a science, wherein the varied pursuits of a practical profession allow us to be mere amateurs; neither do we wish to forget other gentlemen who distinguish themselves

in this branch of science; but we believe that most competent judges allow that the celebrated Cuvier has not left any more fitted to appreciate his excellence, or who has more contributed to extend that science of which the Baron was so distinguished a leader, than Professor Owen.

There is one incident, however, in the Professor's labours, which, for our own purposes, we must relate, because we shall have to refer to it in our humble exhortation to the public and the profession to believe in the practicability of raising medicine and surgery into a definite science. The incident shows what may be done by that mode of investigation, which is the still delayed desideratum in medicine and surgery—namely, the *most comprehensive* record of facts, and the study of their minutest relations. Professor Cuvier was the first to impress, in a special manner, that those beautiful relations in the structure of animals, so many of which are even popularly familiar, extended throughout the animal; so that if any one part, however apparently subordinate, were changed, so

accurate were the adaptations of nature, that all the parts underwent some corresponding modification, so that diversity of structure in a part, affected more or less the whole animal.

The beautiful result of all this is, that if these relations be once thoroughly mastered, then any one part of an animal, to the philosopher so prepared, necessarily suggests to him in general terms the nature of the animal to whom it belonged. Few instances, however, so remarkable as the one we are about to mention, could have been anticipated.

A seafaring man brought a piece of bone, about three or four inches in length, as he said, from New Zealand; and offered it for sale at one or two museums, and amongst others at the College of Surgeons. We shall not here detain the reader by telling all that happened. These things are often brought with intent to deceive, and with false allegations. Most of those to whom the bone was submitted, dismissed it as worthless, or manifested their incredulity; amongst other guesses,

some insinuated that they had seen bones very like it at the London Tavern, regarding it, in fact, as part of an old marrow-bone, to which it bore on a superficial view some resemblance. At length it was brought to Professor Owen, who having looked at it carefully, thought it right to investigate it more narrowly; and after much consideration, he ventured to pronounce his opinion. This opinion from almost anybody else, would have been perhaps only laughed at; for, in the first place, he said that the bone (big enough, as we have seen, to suggest that it had belonged to an ox) had belonged to a bird; but before people had had time to recover from their surprise or other sensation created by this announcement, they were greeted by another assertion yet more startling—namely, that it had been a bird without wings.

Now, we happen to know a good deal of this story, and that the incredulity and doubt with which the opinion was received was too great for a time even for the authority of Professor Owen entirely to dispel. But mark the truthfulness of a real science; contemplate

the exquisite beauty and accuracy of relation in nature! By-and-by, a whole skeleton was brought over to this country, when the opinion of the Professor was converted into an established fact. Nor was this all; there was this appropriate symbol to perpetuate the triumph—that which had appeared as the most startling feature of what had been scarcely better received than as a wild conjecture, was so accurate in fact, as to form the most appropriate name to the animal thus discovered.*

It would be unjust to others to attribute the whole of Professor Owen's appointment to Abernethy; that, the state of things did not place within his single power; but his penetration was the first to suggest, and his weight most potential in securing, an appointment which various circumstances, besides the merits of the individual, bring up in high relief as the best ever made by the College of Surgeons in England.

* It was accordingly named the Apteryx, or wingless, from the Greek, Alpha and Pterux.

To return to the hospital system, as affecting Abernethy. He continued to lecture, and the emoluments arising thence he of course enjoyed. Until 1815, the whole of the hospital fees were taken by the surgeons in chief. These fees, in twenty-eight years, (allowing a reasonable deduction for those pupils who went to the school, independently of the inducement offered by the most attractive lecturer ever known,) must have amounted to an enormous sum. Having raised the school, he became surgeon at about fifty years of age; and then retired at sixty-two, under circumstances we shall presently mention. On retiring, unpleasant altercations arose, which, with others not long antecedent, we are obliged reluctantly to mention, and which rendered his concluding associations with the Hospital scarcely more agreeable than they had been at the College of Surgeons.

Mr. Abernethy had appointed, as we have seen, Mr. Stanley his demonstrator; and some of Mr. Stanley's friends allege, in no very measured language, that he treated that gentle-

man ill. This appeared to us such an absurdity, that we began to think there might be something in the matter with which we were uninformed; and as we had no desire to conceal anything, or to represent a "faultless monster which the world ne'er saw," we wrote to Mr. Stanley to say, that if there were any evidence, documentary or other, in his possession, we would include it in our narrative, either *in extenso*, if not very long, or if long, in such an abbreviated form as he or any friend of his should determine to be faithful. To this we received a reply, simply stating this gentleman's "disinclination" to make any communication on the subject.

With regard to the propriety, the courtesy, or the motive of this "disinclination," we offer no opinion. The reader may form his own from the very brief narrative for which we can alone find space; or if he wishes for more light, he may obtain it from the periodicals of the time (1828). The essential facts were as follows: Mr. Stanley had not even been an apprentice of Mr. Abernethy; having been bound to a Mr.

Ramsden, he had no claims on Mr. Abernethy arising out of the "system;" nor were there any circumstances of a subordinate kind to afford Mr. Abernethy any special inducement. There was nothing very potential for the interests of the school to induce Mr. Abernethy to appoint him. His humble but respectable origin, a homely and not very popular manner, which, as obstacles which too frequently stand in a man's way, reflect the more credit on his progress, were no particular advantages in a school. In fact, few men have ever been so fortunate or so well paid for their industry as to have, without any public competition, a position for which the most distinguished pupils of the School would gladly have contended.

In time, Mr. Abernethy gave Mr. Stanley a share in the Anatomical Lectures. On this occasion, two new demonstrators were appointed; but in the advertisements announcing the arrangements of the ensuing season, Mr. Stanley was still advertised as about to give some of the demonstrations which were really to be given by the new demonstrators.

There was really very little more in this than a mere form, because there was a general understanding that if the newly-appointed demonstrators were not approved of, the demonstrations would be given by the gentleman who had previously held the appointment.

The times were somewhat agitated, and the pupils complained; and some very disagreeable meetings took place in consequence.

Mr. Abernethy alleged that Mr. Stanley put in the advertisements, which was admitted; but it was alleged by Mr. Stanley that he did so by order of Mr. Abernethy, and that he was not "free to act."

The case seems to us to be simply this: If Mr. Abernethy did, either by himself or through Mr. Stanley, put the advertisements in *without the understanding that* Mr. Stanley was to continue the demonstrations, if circumstances required it, he certainly did wrong; but it should be remembered that none of this *was proved*. But we do not see that this betters Mr. Stanley's position. The only pecuniary gainer was to be Mr. Stanley; and

it appears that either he himself put in the advertisements, advertising himself as about to give demonstrations, which, subject to certain conditions, were to be given to others; or allowed Mr. Abernethy to order him to do that of which he (Mr. Stanley) disapproved, and in which he was practically the principal party concerned. For our parts, we are at a loss to determine the superiority of these two positions.

Another charge against Mr. Abernethy was, that in a school which he had raised by his own transcendant talents, and was about to deliver with a numerous class to two gentlemen, who had never helped to form it; whose assistance in the school had been paid by salary; and who thereby occupied positions for which, had they been admitted, there would have been very many competitors: that in a school so constituted, Mr. Abernethy should have desired to secure a place for his son, when he should become qualified for the same. Moreover, that he should have wished Mr. Stanley to enter into a bond for that purpose.

Now we confess to an entire disapproval of all bonds for such purposes ; and we think that Mr. Stanley's declining to enter into it was very natural. It might be very proper for Mr. Abernethy, with a large family of daughters and only one son, to require such a security ; but we think it equally so in Mr. Stanley, with a large family, to decline it. But when we are called upon to admit that it was wrong, we must confess that we cannot see it. There was no parallel to the single arm force by which Mr. Abernethy had raised the rich inheritance he was leaving ; and to talk of that as ill-treating Mr. Stanley, which was a parent's justice to his only son, which was nothing more than an attempt to secure to him, *when qualified*, what certainly, if qualified, he would have had the strongest possible claim to, appears to us neither more or less than arrant nonsense. We shall not attempt to insult the common sense of our readers by attempting a defence where there is no crime.

The stormy virtue of some people is very amusing. When other people's interests are alone concerned, it is like what hurricanes are

now said to be—enormous whirlwinds, into whose vortices everybody's faults are drawn with indiscriminate voracity ; but when their own are concerned, there is an easy calmness which looks with complacent eye on *the necessary expediences of life*, and declares all beyond to be moonshine or Utopianism.

A curious incident occurred in illustration of this about that time. Sir Astley Cooper had, without the smallest intention to give offence, made some observation on the somewhat too free use of some medicine (mercury) at that time in the Borough Hospitals. His observations having been misunderstood or misrepresented, he took occasion to remove any idea of intentional offence, by addressing the class. Among other things, he is reported to have said : “ Why, gentlemen, was it likely that I should say anything unkind towards these gentlemen ? Is not Mr. Green my godson (surgeon of St. Thomas's), Mr. Tyrrell my nephew, Mr. Travers my apprentice (surgeons of St. Thomas's), Mr. Key my nephew, Mr. Cooper my nephew ? ” (surgeons of Guy's).

This was very *naïve*, and a good illustration of the value of evidence in relation to one thing which is stated in relation to another.

But we have no desire to say more on this subject, than to express our conviction that no man ever did more for another, in the worldly sense of the word, than (respective relations considered) Mr. Abernethy did for Mr. Stanley. It is not in the power of any one man to do more by position than to furnish the *elements* for the fortune of another. The combining of them depends on the individual; and whether that exist or not in the present case is not important, as we are happy to hear that fortune has in another way rendered it unnecessary; we have only to regret that any circumstances should have led to the expression of a "disinclination," where a contrary sentiment might have been so gracefully indulged in, and with no greater advantage to anybody than to Mr. Stanley.

The whole of Mr. Abernethy's closing career at the Hospital gave him no great reason to rejoice at the Hospital system. Men who could see nothing in leaving very much more im-

portant situations to an indefinite succession of apprentices, cavilled at a prospective lectureship for his only son ; whilst his lectures were delivered over to two gentlemen : one of whom had from an early period ridiculed, as he said, the opinions which he taught as, and which we now know to have been, John Hunter's ; and another, with whom there had been several not very pleasing associations.

This was necessarily a result of "Hospital system ;" a system that gave a still more melancholy and fatal close to the labours of John Hunter, whose death took place suddenly in the board-room of St. George's Hospital, whilst resisting an interference with a privilege which his love of science rendered valuable to him, and which it was for the interests of science that he should enjoy ; but mournful as these results are, and many others that might be added, still, if we found that the system worked well for science, we might rest satisfied ; but is it so ? What advances have hospital surgeons of London, under the apprentice system, made in the science of surgery ? Let those answer

the question who are desirous of maintaining this system. For our own parts, the retrospect seems to show the system in a more complete manner than anything we have yet stated. John Hunter, that *primus inter omnes*, was no hospital apprentice; he migrated from St. Bartholomew's, where the rule was too exclusive to give him a chance, to St. George's, where he obtained admittance; St. Bartholomew's preserved the system and lost Hunter.

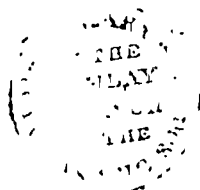
Abernethy was an apprentice, truly; but all those glorious labours which shed such a lustre on his profession, and such a benefit on mankind, were completed long before he became surgeon to St. Bartholomew's Hospital; and it is material to repeat that at that time the assistant surgeons, with the exceptions already stated, had nothing to do. In casting our eyes over the retrospect of years, one honoured name attracts our notice, in connection with a real advance in the knowledge of the functions of nerves. We allude to Sir Charles Bell; but here again the system is unfortunate, for Sir Charles was never a hospital apprentice at all, and only succeeded to a post in a London

hospital after an open canvass in an institution in which the narrow portal of the apprentice system is unrecognized. Still we see signs of a "*Delenda est Carthago*;" as we have said, the point of the wedge is inserted, and a very little extension of public information will at no distant period drive it home.

In the meantime, Science, instead of being in a position to receive every quackery as a means of demonstrating the superior beauty of truth, by placing it in contrast with error, is obliged to regard any absurdity, however gross, as one of the hydra-headed fallacies through which we are to evolve what is true only by the circuitous path of exhausting the resources of hypothesis and conjecture; whilst sweeping epidemics, which, wholesomely regarded, should be looked on reverently as besoms of destruction, are hailed by the observant as melancholy but necessary impulses to drive us to the adoption of measures to which our capital of common sense is not sufficient to induce us to listen.

Neither are the old hospitals the only parts

of a defective system. In others we observe the signs of the prurient appetencies of trade usurping the lofty aspirations of science. There is no hospital in London that yet has even a country establishment of its own for convalescents; whilst of two of the more recently established ones, one is built over a church-yard; and the other, intended only for the relief of decarbonizing organs, is built in the immediate neighbourhood of the most smoky metropolis in Europe. Both, instead of being the most distinguished illustrations of the progress of sanitary and physiological science, are, on the contrary, emphatic examples of their violation.



CHAPTER XIII.

“There is no doubt, but men of genius and leisure, may carry our method to greater perfection, but having had long experience, we have found none equal to it, for the commodiousness it affords in working with the Understanding.”—LORD BACON, vol. III., p. 316, 4th ed.

IN tracing the progress of science, it is very difficult to assign to each individual his just share of merit. The evidence, always more or less incomplete, seldom allows us to do more than to mark the more fortunate, to whom, as it were, the principal parts have been allotted. The exposition of truth generally implies a previous contest with error; this may in one sense be compared with military achievements. We hear of the skill and wisdom of the General

and his associate chiefs, but little is known of individual prowess on the multiplication of which the result so commonly depends.

To one who conferred so many obligations on his country and on mankind as Abernethy, it is difficult to assign only his just share, and yet it is most desirable that nothing be ascribed to him which is doubtful or disputable.

Antecedently to Mr. Abernethy's time, and contemporaneous with the date of Mr. Hunter's labours, surgery had, in the best hands, and as a mere practical *art*, arrived at a very respectable position; still, in Abernethy's early day, barber-surgeons were not yet extinct, and as he used jocosely to phrase it, he himself had "doffed his cap" to barber-surgeons. There is no doubt that some of them had arrived at a very useful knowledge. The celebrated Ambrose Paré was a French barber-surgeon. When Abernethy entered into life, the best representative of the regular surgery of *that day* was Mr. Pott, who was contemporary with the period of Mr. Hunter's labours. Mr. Pott was a good surgeon, an eloquent lecturer, a scholar, and a gentleman,

and he gave some surgical lectures at St. Bartholomew's Hospital. We have perused two manuscript copies of these lectures, which are in the library of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, and they contain many useful and judicious observations. There are ripples of a more humane and scientific surgery, and many parts that are suggestive of onward study. Pott had also the good sense to perceive the measured pretensions of his own time, and to predict advances on it, as great as that itself was, on the surgery of his predecessors; but we do not perceive anything in Pott's lectures in the shape of a science. *Extensive* generalizations we are not thinking of—we have them yet to get; but we see nothing in the true sense of the word even axiomatic; there are no steps, no axioms, by which we can reach the platform of more general propositions. In some of his operations, the most elementary principles are either not perceived or neglected; and although there are general recognitions of the state of the health influencing the so-called surgical maladies, there is no definite principle developed. It is a

recognition scarcely more than that implied in the older surgical writers, when, if the surgical part of a case did not go on well, they recommended the calling in of a physician.

In this state of things, John Hunter began a beautifully simple, and, in its bearings on surgery, we may add, a new mode of inquiry. He saw that there was much in all animals that was common, and that there were analogies in the whole organic kingdom of nature; hence he sought to develop, by observation of the various processes in various animals, and their nearest analogies in vegetables also, the real nature of various phenomena in man. It was not that he did that which had never been attempted before in the abstract, but that he undertook it with a new, a concentrated unity of purpose. He did not employ, as it were, a different instrument to collect the rays of light from surrounding nature; but he concentrated them into a focus on a different object—the nature and treatment of disease. His labours, though not permitted to endure for many years, interrupted by indisposition, and

suddenly stopped by death, were abundantly fruitful, and enabled him to simplify much of surgery that was officious and hurtful, and to correct many errors. He first gave a reason for this or that proceeding, founded on actual observation of natural processes: thus, in healing of wounds, the natural and healthy were distinguished from unnatural and unhealthy processes, and so forth. But as Mr. Hunter's enlarged views taught him the value of the relations observable throughout the whole animal creation, he contemplated parts of the body only as a step to the more successful observation of the whole. As before stated, he observed the phenomena exhibited by the various organs, both separately and in connection; traced them with elaborate circumspection, and concluded by justifying what Abernethy said, when he observed: "Hunter proved that the whole body sympathized with all its parts."

Now, many of the facts which Mr. Hunter remarked in the relations established between different parts of the body were, in the strictest sense, axiomatic—that is, they were exempli-

fications of laws to which they were the necessary steps. Take one, for example—that the part sympathetically affected by an impression previously made on another part, appeared to be frequently *more affected* than the part with which it had appeared to sympathize. This we now know to be no exception, but rather the law; because the exceptions, as we contend, are explicable;* but that was not then perceived. Abernethy, however, made use of this so far as to impress the fact, that organs might be seriously 'disordered without any symptoms apparently referable to them.

Now, Abernethy might have continued to labour as Hunter did in collecting facts as the materials for axioms, or as elements for future and more extensive generalization; or he might have at once taken Mr. Hunter's views, so far as he had gone, and working on them with his remarkable aptitude for perceiving the more salient and practical relations of facts, have applied them at once to practical purposes;

* See "Medicine and Surgery one Inductive Science." 1838.

gleaning more facts as his extremely acute observation might enable him to do on the way. He pursued, perhaps, neither course exclusively, but the latter appeared to be the one he chiefly adopted; and from the more immediate fruition it affords, no doubt it was best adapted to the exigencies of a practical profession.

John Hunter was a man of indefatigable industry, and exceedingly *circumspect* in his observance of facts. Abernethy was fagging too, but more impulsive and not so dogged; mere facts were mere bores to him; he panted for *practical* relations, and was most wonderfully quick in perceiving them. His vision was as penetrative as Hunter's had been circumspect and cautious. Hunter would have sifted all the useful things out of any heap, however heterogeneous; Abernethy would have looked through it, at once found the one jewel that it concealed, and left the rest for the next comer. They were both most perfectly honest and truthful, both careless of money, both enthusiasts in science,—that is, both ardent in the pursuit of truth, with that kind of feeling which

does not stop to examine the utilitarian relations of these pursuits, but which, carried on by a continually increasing impulse, takes the good for granted, and is impelled by the love of truth for its own sake.

But, interesting as it is to observe those requisitions which, as indispensable, are common to the successful investigators of science, it is yet more so to see the distinctive character of John Hunter and John Abernethy. The former, with many ideas to tell, and most of them new, had a difficulty in expressing himself. With more need than any man before him for additional facilities in this way, he had a restricted vocabulary: again, in making use of it, his style was seldom easy, often obscure; so that things which, when thoroughly understood, had no feature more striking than their simplicity, were often made to appear difficult, and by many readers, no doubt, had often been left unexamined.

Abernethy, on the contrary, had a happy facility of expressing himself, and a power rarely equalled of singling out the difficult parts

of a subject, and simplifying them down to the level of ordinary capacities. Hunter, though not without imagination or humour even, had these qualities held in abeyance by the unceasing concentration of his intellectual faculty. As Abernethy used to say, "John Hunter was always thinking." Abernethy, on the contrary, had an active imagination; it always accompanied his intellect, like a young, joyous attendant, constantly lighting up the more sombre propositions of her grave companion, with variety of illustration. The most difficult proposition, directly Abernethy began to fashion it, had all its rough points taken off, and its essential features brought out clear and orderly to the plainest intellect. John Hunter's manner of laying down facts the most important to the formation of a medical science (take place when it may) was not able to keep people awake. Abernethy's treatment of the most dry and unimportant, kept the class unceasingly interested. The obscurity of language in Hunter was happily replaced not only by an unusual ease, but by a *curiosa felicitas* in Abernethy. In

sustained composition, Hunter, generally difficult, often obscure; Abernethy, if not faultless, always easy and unaffected. If his style failed sometimes in earnestness and vigour, it was always sincere; and though not deficient in elegance, yet, if it asserted no special claim to that excellence, it was always pleasing and perspicuous.

Nothing could be further from the earnest and thinking John Hunter than anything dramatic; Abernethy had that happy variety of countenance and manner that can be conveyed by no other term. Hunter, without being slow, was cautious, circumspect; Abernethy, without being hasty, was rapid, penetrative, and impulsive. Never were two minds so admirably fitted for the heavy-armed pioneering in science, and the comparatively light-trooped intellect, which was calculated to render the first clearing easily convertible to those practical necessities, with which the science had to deal. Accordingly, we find that Abernethy very soon extended Mr. Hunter's views, and applied them so powerfully, as at least to create the dawns of a science. He showed that all processes

in the economy, and, of course, therefore, those of disease, are essentially nervous in their origin.—that is to say, the nerves being the *instruments* through which our relations are established with surrounding nature (however much we may, in common language, speak of this or that feeling, this or that *organ*, or this or that part of the body), all impressions, must still be made on the sensitive or nervous system of that part; and this, of course, whether they imply consciousness, or be altogether independent of it, that disturbed nervous action was, as the case might be, either the forerunner, or the proximate cause of the disease; and that, therefore, the relief of diseased or disordered actions, however attempted, consisted ultimately and essentially in the restoration of healthy nervous power, or adaptation.

This, then, is the first proposition. The next thing, obviously, in the prevention or cure of disease, therefore, is the tranquillizing nervous disorders.

Now here there are many things to be regarded; for man is a moral as well as a physical

being, and the circumstances by which he is surrounded, even the air he breathes, the moral and physical impressions to which he is subjected, are very often not under his own control, much less of his medical attendant. On the other hand, the food is in civilized communities very much under the influence of his volition; and there are many circumstances which, instead of impeding those adaptations which disorder requires, render them particularly easy—it frequently happening that those things which are really best, are the most easily procured. This is important, because the next proposition is *that the nervous system is very easily and constantly disturbed by disorder of one or other, or the whole of the digestive organs*, and that therefore the tranquillizing of disturbance in them is of the highest consequence in the treatment of disease; *few* propositions in *any* science are more susceptible of proof than the foregoing. But if this be so, we must now recollect the full force of what we have observed with regard to relation—that is, we must not restrict our notion of it to the general loose

assent that there is *a* relation in all parts of the body, and rest on the simple admission, for example, that animals are formed in adaptation to their habits ; but we must sustain the Cuyier-like impression of the fact, the Owen-like application of it to the phenomena ; recollect that *preconceived* ideas of magnitude or minuteness, can do nothing but obscure and mislead ; and that the relations established in the body, are constant and universal, however they may at first—as in the case we have quoted—excite the surprise or the derision of the less informed and less reflecting. We must take their immensely potential power as existing *as certainly in the most trifling headache as in the most malignant fever, in the smallest scratch as in the most complicated compound fracture.* We have plenty of facts now to prove this ; but the first plain clear enunciation of it all, the successful demonstration of it at the bedside, and the consequent diminution of an enormous amount of human suffering, is the great debt we owe to Abernethy. Mankind in general admitted that Diet was of consequence. Nobody doubted its force

as an accessory in treatment. Lactantius said: "Sis prudens ad victum sine quo cetera remedia frustra adhibentur;" but no one had recognized the treatment of the Digestive Organs as the essential part of the treatment of *surgical* diseases, nor founded it on the same comprehensive view of its relations as addressed to organs which executed the nutritive functions of the body on the one hand, and were the *most potential disturbers or tranquillizers of the nervous system on the other*, and thus for ever linked them in their practical relations with the fact, that the essential character of disease, the *fons et origo*, is disturbed nervous power. But as all disease is merely the result of two conditions—namely, the injurious influence acting, and the body acted on, it matters not whether the injurious influence be sudden, violent, slow moderate, chemical, mechanical, or what not; so the foregoing positions affect the whole practice of medicine, and must not be held as affecting any one part of it, but as influencing equally both medicine and surgery.

We do trust that these few propositions

will induce some to think ; for, as Abernethy used to say, lectures will never make surgeons ; and we feel equally confident that no books, no individual efforts, however costly or sincere, will really benefit or inform any portion of the public or the profession, except such of them as may be induced to *think for themselves*. They have only to recollect that, in carrying out such principles, they must not measure their influence by their previously conceived notions, they must encourage labour when they see the profession willing, and not thwart them by showing that it will be labour in vain. There will soon be science if it is encouraged,

“Sint Mæcenates, non deerunt Flacci,”

If they are disposed to think investigation too minute to be practical, or precision too unpleasant to be necessary, let them remember the story of Professor Owen’s beautiful application of minute relation, and that the distinction between a huge common quadruped and an unknown wingless bird could alone be dis-

covered by particulars far more minute than they will be called on once in a hundred times to observe or to follow. The obligation we have already noticed has in some sense revolutionized the practice of medicine and surgery, and is no doubt the capital debt we owe to Abernethy, but there are many others. His application and adjustment of the operation of the trephine was a beautiful and discriminating achievement, and would alone have been sufficient to have raised an ordinary reputation.

His first extension of John Hunter's operation for aneurism, shows how ready he was—when he could do so with advantage—to enlarge the application of that branch of our duties which he least valued—namely, operative surgery.

His proposal to add to the treatment of the diseases of joints, the apparatus of splints for ensuring absolute quiescence of the affected surfaces, has saved a most incalculable number of limbs from amputation. It here becomes necessary to repeat a remark we have made in a former work. Sir B. Brodie recommends this plan only in the third edition, I think, of

his book on the joints, not appearing to have been aware that Abernethy taught it for nearly thirty years previously, about ten years of which we ourselves had repeatedly tested its great value, and taught it, but contemporaneously from Abernethy, in our own lectures. Indeed, so important an element is it in the treatment of diseases of the joints, that we have never seen it fail, when fairly applied and accompanied by a reasonable attention to the general health, except in the following cases:— first, when the patient has been nearly worn out by disease, before subjected to treatment; and, secondly, where the complaint has been proved to be accompanied by internal organic disease.

We have always thought that one of the greatest boons to mankind was Abernethy's lesson on fracture of the neck of the thigh bone within the capsule of the joint. For thirty years Sir Astley Cooper taught, and boasted that he had taught, that this fracture could not unite by bone; Sir Astley reasoning on the anatomy of the part *only*, and conceiving that the neck, in its somewhat isolated position,

would be imperfectly nourished; and seeing that, in point of fact, this fracture *did generally* unite by ligament only, unfortunately adopted the foregoing idea as the *cause* of the fact, and concluded that bony union was impracticable. Experiments on animals—at all times extremely fallacious, and in this case singularly imperfect in the analogy they afforded—appeared to confirm his views. Despairing of effecting a proper union, he adopted a treatment which rendered it impossible. Abernethy's beautiful reasoning on the subject, led him to an opposite conclusion. It embraced certain views of Hunter's, and some common phenomena in other accidents where the union by ligament is *coincident* with motion of the part. He therefore treated all cases with a view to secure bony union, and he and many of his pupils had no doubt but that they had seen examples of it. Still, people got well and were lost sight of, and therefore it was said, that the fracture was not *wholly* within the capsule of the joint. At length a specimen was procured from the examination of a dead body, and the question

set at rest, we believe, in the minds of everybody, that this fracture, though it require especial care to keep parts steady and in apposition, will unite just like other fractures in the way taught (and since proved) by Abernethy. Let those who can calculate the number of surgeons who have been educated by these two gentlemen, and who for the first few years almost certainly have followed the practice of their instructors, compute the number of those of the lame who, under Providence, have walked in consequence of the clear-sighted reasoning of Abernethy.

How the French surgeons may have been influenced by Abernethy in this point, I do not know. When I was first in Paris, in 1824, they were divided; but I recollect Baron Larrey showing me a case which he regarded as a clear example of this fracture in course of firm consolidation, and he was well aware of the opinion of Abernethy.

The bearing which Abernethy's acuteness of observation of the influence of the state of the digestive organs on so-called specific poisons in

producing or maintaining diseases resembling them, opposed as it was to the most powerful conventionalism, is a proof of his clear judgment ; and, if we mistake not, will one day prove to have been the first ripple of a most important law in the animal economy, which will shed a light as new on specific affections as his other principles have on diseases in general.

His treatment of that severe malady, "lumbar abscess," is, in our view, a most splendid addition to humane and successful surgery, and as regards one of its distinctive characters, he has, as we have shown, received the encomiums of the most distinguished of his contemporaries, including Sir Astley Cooper.

The manner in which he applied that law which prevails in voluntary muscles to the replacement of dislocations—namely, that muscles under the influence of the will cannot ordinarily act long and unremittingly, was an amendment as humane as scientific; and whilst it has removed from surgery a farrier-like roughness in the treatment of dislocations as repulsive as unnecessary, it has adjusted the application of

more sustained force, when it becomes necessary, on principles at once humane, safe and effectual. In short, whatever part of surgery we consider, we should have something to say of Abernethy—either something new in itself, or improved in application. We find him equally patient and discriminative, wherever there is danger; thus there is the same force and originality on the occasional consequences on the simple operation of bleeding in the arm, and the more serious proceeding of perforating the cranium. He is everywhere acute, penetrating, discriminative, humane and practical; so that it is difficult which most to admire, his enlarged views in relation to important general principles, or the pervading science and humanity with which he invests their minutest details.

Hunter's method of investigation was highly inductive; and whenever he adhered to it, the structure he has left is stable, and fit for further superadditions. Whenever he proceeded on any preconceived notions, or on an induction manifestly imperfect, his conclusions have, as we think, been proved unsound. His definition

of disease as distinct from accidental injury, is one instance which we formerly noticed in our own works; and some of his conclusions in regard to poisons—as mercury, for example—will not hold; but all that Abernethy made use of, either in developing his own views, or maturing their practical applications, were sound, and most careful deductions from obvious and incontrovertible facts. Abernethy took equal care to deduce nothing from them, or from anything of his own observations, but the most strictly logical inferences—conclusions which were, in truth, little more than the expression of the facts, and therefore irrefragable. He showed that, however dissimilar, nervous disturbance was the essential element of disease; and that the removal of that disturbance was the essential element of cure. That no mode should be neglected, therefore, which was capable of exerting an influence on the nervous system; but that whether he looked at the subject as mere matter of fact, or as assisted by the phenomena of health or disease generally, or merely to that which was most within our power; that no

more potential disturbers of the nervous system were to be found than in disturbances addressed to the digestive organs, and that the tranquillizing of these must always be a leading object in our endeavours to achieve the still greater one of tranquillizing nervous disorder:

The absurd idea that he looked chiefly to the stomach, that he thought of nothing but blue pills or alterative doses of mercury, need scarcely detain us. His works show, and his lectures still more, that there was no organ in the body which had not been the object of his special attention; in almost all cases in advance of his time, and not exceeded in practical value by anything now done. We know of nothing more valuable or clear *now* than his paper on the skin; nothing so advanced or important as his observations on the lungs and skin, and the relations of these important organs; and it is unnecessary to repeat what has been already said about the digestive organs. His medical treatment was always very simple, and if its more salient object was to correct disorders of the liver, it was because he knew that the important

relations of that organ not only rendered it very frequently the cause of many disorders, but that there could be nothing materially wrong in the animal economy, by which it must not be more or less affected. He carried the same clearness and definiteness of purpose into his prescriptions, as that which characterized all his investigations; and indisposed to employ any means except on some principle, used but few remedies; although he by no means wished to deter others from having recourse to a more extended pharmacopæia. We regret, indeed, the impossibility of doing full justice to Abernethy in anything less than a running commentary on the publication of his works; but we have said enough we trust, to show how largely the profession and mankind are indebted to him.

Now, in these days of testimonials, what memorials have we of Abernethy? It is true there is no monument in Westminster Abbey, and only a bust at St. Bartholemew's. His portrait, to be sure, given by his pupils, hangs at St. Bartholemew's, exalted where it can

hardly be distinctly seen, to be replaced by those of Mr. Vincent, and Mr. Lawrence in his Professor's gown ! But he has still a :

“ Monumentum ære perennius,”

in the claim he has established to the rarely so truly earned honour of “ nihil quod non tetigit, et nihil quod tetigit, quod non ornavit;” in the grateful hearts of many a pupil who had no other obligation to him than his beautiful lessons ; and in an improved medical Surgery, which, though it may have in *London* rather retrograded than otherwise since his time, is felt more or less in its moral as well as its medical bearings, and in a diminution of suffering and an improved practice throughout the civilized world.

But, if Abernethy's views are so true or so excellent as we allege that they are, they must have *some* relation to anything that is good in every kind of medical or surgical treatment ; and this equally whatever the system (so called) whence it may arise, however much of truth or

error it may contain, or however perplexingly their qualities may be blended together. These are points on which we have yet something to say, and as we are anxious that the public and the profession should favour us with their attention to the very few remarks we have the space to offer, we must have a new chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Que res neque consilium neque modum habet ullum
Eam consilio regere non potes.”

TER.

POSITION, PROGRESS, AND PROSPECTS OF THE PRO-
FESSION — OF HYDROPATHY—OF HOMŒOPATHY — OF
QUACKERY—OF PUBLIC IGNORANCE.

A WRITER* of no ordinary judgment and discrimination has observed, that “it often happens in human affairs that the evil and the remedy grow up at the same time: the remedy unnoticed and at a distance scarcely visible perhaps above the earth; whilst the evil may shoot rapidly into strength, and alone catch the eye of the observer by the immensity of

* Professor Smythe, Lectures on Modern History, Vol. I, p. 74.

“its shadow; and yet,” he adds, “a future age
 “may be able to mark how the one declined
 “and the other advanced, and how returning
 “spring seemed no longer to renew the honours
 “of the one, while it summoned into maturity
 “and progress the perfection of the other.”

We know not how it may appear to the reader, but we cannot help thinking that there is a far-seeing perception of a very leading character of human affairs in the foregoing sentence. There is no evil but which is charged with a certain degree of good. At first it is, indeed, “scarcely visible,” nay, it escapes alike the most penetrative perception and faithful confidence in the surpassing working-to-good of all things around us; but so soon as the evil begins to tell, so soon as the full flood of mischief becomes obtrusive or remarkable, the small ripple of some corrective principle becomes apparent.

It would be easy to illustrate the foregoing proposition from general history, from the progress of nations, or even from the contracted area of private families. But we will confine

ourselves to an illustration more directly in relation to our immediate object — namely, the present condition and prospects of medical science.

There are, no doubt, many persons who view the present state of medical science as little better than the triumphant domination of something little superior to a conjectural art, and which has long obscured and is still very imperfectly representing a beautiful science; and that the perception of the true relations which it bears to such science, has been veiled by the impression that it involved some mystery from which the general public, who were most interested in its development, were necessarily excluded.

There have been at all times individuals, perhaps sufficiently astute to observe the real truth of the matter; but still they were rare exceptions, and did not prevent Mystery from conferring on a very considerable section of people the social advantage of a gainful profession; that property being enhanced, of course, in that it ministered to an ignorant

public. But even in an early stage, correctives to an equivocally-earned advantage began to appear ; for a thing which had no character but its indefiniteness, and its apparent facility of acquisition, obtained many followers: the supply, such as it was, was thus so close in relation to the demand, that what in theory seemed necessarily very gainful, on the whole proved anything but a lucrative profession. As contrasted with any other, or a variety of commercial pursuits, medical men were neither so affluent, nor always so secure of their position. Retiring competency in well-conducted callings has, in a rich country, been rather the rule. We fear in the medical profession it is the exception ; which we are apprehensive (in its bereaved dependants) contributes more applicants for eleemosynary relief than any other profession.

This surely is not a state of things which can be well made worse. Public ignorance, the real mischief, has, in the meantime, been left uninformed, and every attempt to enlighten it has too often been branded with some form or other of corrupt motive. Public positions have

been conferred without competition, the surest source of fitness or excellence ; and the public have been further doubly barred out, so that the chance of eliciting men of spirit and enthusiasm has been diminished by the first positions having been often rendered contingent on the payment of money in the right quarter.

But all this time corrections were slowly springing up. Hundreds were beginning, under the light of a more liberal diffusion of general knowledge, to feel that the so-called science of medicine and surgery was very different from science usually so termed ; and whilst other sciences were affording that which was definite and positive, the juxtaposition only seemed to bring out in higher relief the prevailing character of conjecture and uncertainty in medicine.

People began to see that mystery is but mystery, to whatever it is applied, and that one man can see in the dark about as well as another ; that where all is obscure, any one may scramble with a chance of success. Accordingly, we observe that a state of things has

gradually been rising up, which, if it do not justify the expression of *quot medici tot empirici*, at least leads us to deplore that, of all callings in life, no one ever had such a legion of parasites as are represented by the hydra-headed quackeries which infest the medical profession. Naturally enough too, Quackery attacked chiefly those disorders, in regard to which Mystery avowed its incapacity, or declared to be incurable; and this, while the regular profession made their own limited knowledge the measure of the powers of nature, the quacks unconsciously proceeded, *de facto*, more philosophically, when they neither avowed nor acknowledged any other limits than those of observation and experience.

Amongst, no doubt, innumerable failures and, as we know, a multiplicity of fictions, they would now and then, in acting violently on the various organs, blunder on the last link in the chain—the immediate cause of the disorder, and perhaps effect the removal of a so-called incurable malady. Thus whilst the regular profession were making their own knowledge the measure

of remedial possibility, and were reposing contentedly on the rule, they were every now and then undermined, or tripped up, by unexplained exceptions.

It is difficult to conceive any state of things, when once observed, more calculated to drive men to the obvious remedy that a definite science would alone afford; nor should it be forgotten that multiform quackeries, with mesmerism to boot, are coincident with a system which allows not one single appointment which the public are accustomed to regard as authority to be open to scientific competition. Of late too, many persons have begun to examine for themselves, questions which they had been wont to leave entirely to their medical adviser.

The sanitary movement has shown that more people die every year from avoidable causes than would satisfy the yawning gulf of a severe epidemic or the most destructive battle. In a crowded community, many events are daily impressing on the heads of families, besides the expedience of avoiding unnecessary expenses, that long illnesses are long evils; that their

dearest connections are sometimes prematurely broken ; and that parts are not unfrequently found diseased which were not suspected to be so during life. The thought will sometimes occur whether this may have been always consequent on the difficulty of the subject, or whether it may not sometimes have been the result of too hasty or too restricted an inquiry ; that not only (as the Spanish tutor told his royal pupil of kings) do patients die “ sometimes,” but, very frequently.

These and other circumstances have induced many of the public to inquire into the reason of their faith in us ; and to ask how it happens that whilst all other sciences are popularized and progressing, that there should be anything so recondite in the laws governing our own bodies as to be accessible only to comparatively few ; especially as they have begun to perceive that their interest in knowing such laws is of the greatest possible importance.

Amongst various attempts to better this condition of things, the imagination of men has been very active. Too proud to obey the

guidance, or too impatient to await the fruition of those cautious rules which the intellect has imposed on the one hand, and so signally rewarded (whenever observed) on the other, Imagination set forth on airy wing, and brought home curiosities which she called science, and observations which, because they contained some of that truth of which even fancies are seldom entirely deprived, blinded her to the perception of a much larger proportion of error.

Two of these curiosities have made considerable noise, have been not a little damaging to the pecuniary interests of the medical profession, and have been proportionately species of El Dorados to the followers of them. We allude to the so-called Homœopathy and Hydro-
pathy.

Homœopathy proceeds on an axiom that diseases are cured by remedies which excite an action similar to that of the disease itself: "*Similia similibus curantur.*"

Our objection to this dogma is twofold, and in the few hints we are giving, we wish them not to be confounded.

1st. It is *not* proven.

2nd. It is *not* true.

Take the so-called fever. The immediate and most frequent causes of fever are, bad air, unwholesome food, mental inquietude, derangement of the digestive organs, severe injuries. Now it is notorious that very important agents in the cure of all fevers are good air, carefully exact diet, or temporary abstinence, and correction of disordered functions, with utmost repose of mind and body, and so forth.

So of small-pox, one of the most instructive of all diseases. All the things favourable to small-pox are entirely opposite to those which conduct the patient safely through this alarming disease; and so clearly is this the case, that, if known beforehand, its virulence can be indefinitely moderated so as to become a comparatively innoxious malady.

We might go on multiplying these illustrations to almost any extent. What, then, is the meaning of the *similia similibus curantur*? This we will endeavour, so far as there is any truth in it, to explain. The truth is, that Nature has but one mode, principle, or law in

dealing with injurious influences on the body. Before we offer the few hints we propose to do on these subjects (and we can here do no more), we entirely repudiate that sort of abusive tone which is too generally adopted. That never can do anybody any good. We believe both systems to be dangerous fallacies, but like all other things not allowed to be entirely uncharged with good. We shall state as popularly as possible in what respect we deem them to be dangerous fallacies, and in what we deem them to be capable of effecting some good; because it is our object to show, in respect to both, that the good they do is because they accidentally, as it were, chip off a small corner of the principles of Abernethy.

Homœopathy is one of those hypotheses which show the power that a minute portion of truth has to give currency to a large quantity of error, and how much more powerful in the uninformed are appeals to the imagination than to the intellect. The times are favourable to homœopathy. To some persons who had accustomed themselves to associate medical attendance with short visits, long bills, a gentleman in

black all smiles, and a numerous array of red bottles, homœopathy must have addressed itself very acceptably. It could not but be welcome to hear that all the above not very pleasing impressions could be at once dismissed by simply swallowing the decillionth part of a grain of some efficacious drug. Then there was the prepossession so common in favour of mystery. How wonderful! so small a quantity! What a powerful medicine it must be! It was as good as the fortune-telling of the gipsies. There! take that, and then you will see what will happen next! Then, to get released from red bottles tied over with blue or red paper, which, if they were not infinitesimal in dose, had appeared infinite in number, to say nothing of the wholesome repulsion of the palate.

Besides, after the bottles came the bill, having no doubt the abominable character of all bills, which, by some law analagous to gravitation, appear to enlarge in a terrifically accelerating ratio, in proportion to their longevity; so that they fall at last with an unexpected and a very unwelcome gravity. Then homœopathy did not

restrict itself to infinitesimal doses of medicine, but recommended people to live plainly, to relinquish strong drinks, and, in short, to adopt what, at least, seemed an approximation to a simple mode of living. To be serious—What then are the objections to homœopathy?

Is there no truth then in the dogma, “*Similia similibus curantur*?” We will explain. The laws governing the human body have an established mode of dealing with all injurious influences, which is identical in principle, but infinitely varied and obscured in its manifestations, in consequence of multifarious interferences; in that respect, just like the laws of light or gravitation. As we have no opportunity of going into the subject at length, we will give a hint or two which will enable the observing, with a moderate degree of painstaking, to see the fallacy. You can *demonstrate* no fallacy in a mathematical process even without some work, neither can you do so in any science; so let that absence of complete demonstration be no bar to the investigation of the hints we give. All medicines are more or less poisons; that is,

they have no nutritive properties, or these are so overbalanced by those which are injurious, that the economy immediately institutes endeavours for their expulsion, or for the relief of the disturbance they excite. All organs have a special function of their own, but all can on occasions execute those of some other organ. So, in carrying out injurious influences, organs have peculiar relations to different forms of matter; that is, ordinarily. Thus, the stomach is impatient of ipecacuanha, and substances which we call emetics; the liver of mercury, alcohol, fat and saccharine matters, and so forth. In the same way, we might cite examples of other organs which ordinarily deal with particular natural substances. But then, by the compensating power they have, they *can* deal with any substance on special occasions.

Now the natural mode in which all organs deal with injurious substances, or substances which tend to disturb them, is by pouring forth their respective secretions; but if, when stimulated, they have not the power to do that, then they evince, as the case may be, disorder or disease.

Thus, for example : If we desire to influence the secretion from the liver, mercury is one of *the many things* which will do it. But if mercury cease to do this, it will produce disease ; and, if carried to a certain extent, of no organ more certainly than the liver. Thus, again, alcohol in certain forms is a very useful medicine for the liver ; yet nothing in continuance more notoriously produces disease of that organ. So that it happens that all things, which in one form disorder an organ, may in another form, in greater or more continued doses, tend to correct that disorder by inducing there a greater stimulation of its secretions.

This is the old dogma, long before homœopathy was heard of, of one poison driving out another. This is the way in which fat bacon in one case may be a temporary or a good stimulant of a liver, which it equally disorders in another ; for as the liver is a decarbonizing agent as well as the lungs, so articles rich in carbon are all stimulants of that organ, useful exceptionally, invariably disordering if habitual or excessive.

But if this be so, what becomes of the "*curantur?*" To that, we say it is far from proven. Medicine, hardly ever, perhaps never, strictly speaking, cures, but it often materially assists in putting people in a *curable* condition, proper for the agencies of more natural influences. True. Well, then, may not homœopathy be good here? We doubt it, and for this reason. Medicine, to do good, should *act* on the organ to which it is directed; it is itself essentially a poison, and does well to relieve organs by which *it is expelled*; but if you give medicine in very small doses, or so as to institute an artificial condition of those sentinels the nerves, you may accumulate a fearful amount of injurious influence in the system before you are at all aware of it; and it is the more necessary to be aware of this in respect to homœopathy, because the medicines which many of these gentlemen employ are active poisons, as belladonna, aconite, and so on. We have seen disturbed states of nerves, bordering on paralysis, which were completely unintelligible until we found that the patient

had been taking small doses of narcotic poisons. We have no desire whatever to forestall the cool decisions of experience, but we earnestly request the attention of the homœopathist to the foregoing remarks; and if he thinks there is anything in them, to peruse the arguments on which we found the law of which we have formerly spoken.*

We must in candour admit that, as far as the inquiry into all the facts of the case go, as laid down by Hahnemann, we think the profession may take a hint with advantage. We have long pleaded for more accuracy in this respect; but we fear as yet pleaded in vain. Homœopathic influences may be perhaps more successful. Practically, the good that results from homœopathy as it appears to us, may be thus stated: that if people will leave off drinking alcohol, live plainly, and take very little medicine, they will find that many disorders will be relieved by this treatment alone.

For the rest, we fear that the so-called small

* See "Medicine and Surgery, One Inductive Science, (the so-called Law of Inflammation.)"

doses are either inert, or if taken so as to produce effect, incur the risk of accumulating in the system influences injurious to the economy, which the history of mercury, arsenic, and other poisons show to be nothing uncommon; and, further, that this tends to keep out of sight the real uses, and the measured influences of medicine, which in the ordinary practice, their usual effects serve, as the case may be, to suggest or demonstrate.

Practically, therefore, the good effects of homœopathy resolve themselves, so far as they are good, into a more or less careful diet, and small doses of medicine; which, as we have said, is a chipping off of the views of Abernethy.

We regret we have no space to consider the relation of homœopathy to serious and acute diseases, we can therefore only say that the facts which have come before us, have left no doubts on our minds of its being alike dangerous and inapplicable.

One morning, a nobleman asked his surgeon (who was representing to him the uselessness of

consulting a medical man without obeying his injunctions), what he thought would be the effect of his going into a hydropathic establishment? "That you would get perfectly well," was the reply, "for there your lordship would get plain diet and good air, and, as I am informed, good hours; in short, the very things I recommend to you, but which you will not adopt with any regularity."

Hydrophy sets out, indeed, with water as its staple, and the skin as the organ to which it chiefly addresses itself; but we take it that the hydropathic physician, if he sees nothing in philosophical medicine, he discovers sufficient in human nature, to prevent him from trading on so slender a capital. There was, no doubt, in the imperfection of medical science, a fine opening left for a scheme which proposed to rest its merits chiefly on an organ so much neglected.

There has never been anything bordering on a proper attention to the skin until recently, and, even now, any care commensurate with the importance of the organ, is the exception rather

than the rule. Thirty years ago, Abernethy, when asked by a gentleman as to the probable success of a bathing establishment, said that the profession would not be persuaded to attend to the subject, and that, in respect to the capital which the gentleman proposed to invest in it, he had better keep the money in his pocket. This was said in relation to the general importance of attention to the skin, and also in connection with making it the portal for the introduction of medical agents generally. Abernethy was, in fact, the person who first introduced Lalouette's method of affecting the system by mercury applied in vapour.

Hydropathy, deals with a very powerful agent, and applies it to a very powerful and important organ, the skin; and it employs in combination the energetic influences, temperature and moisture. So that we may be assured there will be very little that is equivocal or infinitesimal in its results; that in almost every case it must do good or harm.

But it does not limit itself to these agencies. It has "establishments;" that is to say, pleasant

rural retreats, tastefully laid out gardens, plain diet, often, no doubt, agreeable society, rational amusements, and, as we understand, good hours, and abstinence from alcohol. These are, indeed, powerful agencies for a vast variety of diseases. So that, if hydropathy be not very scientific, it is certainly a clever scheme; and as there are very many people who require nothing but good air, plain living, rest from their anxious occupations, and agreeable society, it is very possible that many hydropathic patients get well by just doing that which they could not be induced to do before.

But here comes the objection: the skin is, in the first place, only one of the organs of the body, and it is in very different condition in different people, and in the same people at different periods.

It has, like other organs, its mode of dealing with powerful or with injurious influences; and *if it deal with them* in the full force of the natural law, it affects (and in disease almost uniformly) favourably the internal organs; but, on the other hand, *if there be interfering*

influences opposed to the healthy exhibition of the natural law, so that the skin do not deal with the cold, or other agencies, to which it is subjected, *as it naturally should do*, then the cold, moisture, or other agent increases the determination of blood to the internal organs and does mischief. This it may do in one of two ways; we have seen both. 1st. The blood driven from the surface increases *pro tanto* the quantity in the internal organs; it must go somewhere; it can go nowhere else. Or if cold and moisture produce not this effect, nor be attended with a reactive determination to the surface, there may be an *imperfect* reaction, that is, short of the surface of the body. In the first case, you dangerously increase the disorder of any materially affected organ; in the latter, you incur the risk of diseased depositions, as, for example, Tumours. We here speak from our own experience, having seen tumours of the most malignant and cancerous character, developed under circumstances which it appeared impossible to ascribe the immediate cause to anything else but the violently depressing in-

fluences of hydropathic treatment on the skin with a co-existing disordered condition of internal organs.

In one very frightful case indeed the patient was told, when he first stated his alarm, that the tumour was a "crisis" or reaction, as sure enough it was, but it was the reaction of a cancerous disease which destroyed the patient. But, as we have said, hydropathy has many features which obviously minister very agreeably and advantageously to various conditions of indisposition, whilst they favour the observance of something like a rational diet; a point of immense consequence, and too much neglected in regular practice. Here again we speak from actual observation. One man lets his patient eat what he pleases. An eminent physician replied to a patient who, as he was leaving the room, asked what he should do about his diet, "Oh, I leave that to yourself;" showing, as we think, a better knowledge of human nature than of his profession. Another restricts his patient "to anything light." Others see no harm in patients eating three or four things

at dinner, "provided they are wholesome," thus rendering the solution of many a question in serious cases three or four times of course as difficult. Now we do not require the elaborate apparatus of a hydropathic establishment to cure disorders after such loose practice as this; and we do protest against the assertion that any such treatment can be called, as we have sometimes heard it, "Abernethy's plan, attention to diet," and so forth.

So far from anything *less* than the beautifully simple views held out by Abernethy being necessary, we trust that we have some of us arrived, as we ought to do, at several improvements. But people will confound a *plain* diet with a *starving* diet, and hating restrictions altogether, naturally prefer a physician who is good-natured and assenting; still this assentation is being visited, we think, with a justly retributive reaction.

Hydropathy, in many points, no doubt, tends to excite attention to the real desiderata; but it is nevertheless imperfect and dangerous, because, evidently charged with a capital error.

It entirely fails in that comprehensive view of the relations which exists in all animals between the various organs, and on a sustained recollection and examination of which, rests the safe treatment of any one of them. It is, therefore, unsafe and unscientific. Again, it is illogical, because it proceeds, as regards the skin, on the suppressed premise, that it will obtain a natural reaction; a thing, in a very large number of cases, and those of the most serious kind, seldom to be calculated on.

It is quite clear, therefore, that, so far as hydropathy does good, it effects it by the institution of diet, abstinence from alcohol, country air, exercise, agreeable society, and *we* will suppose in some cases, appropriate care of the surface, all of which are in a general sense beneficial to the nervous system and the digestive organs; the points insisted on by Abernethy.

So long as the public are not better informed, and until medicine is more strictly cultivated as a science, they will necessarily be governed by their first impressions on their feelings; and so long as this is the case, fallacies can never be

Exposed, except by the severe lessons of experience. In the hope to reason successfully with those whose feelings induce them to adopt that which they too often decline to examine, is madness, and is just what Terence says of some other feelings :

“ Nihilo plus agas

Quam si des operam ut cum ratione insanias.”

But although, therefore, we are neither hydropathists nor homœopathists, we begin to see in the very success of these things some good ; that the “ great shadow of the evil” of a conjectural science will one day be replaced, by another example of the triumph of an inductive philosophy ; that the retiring confidence of the public will induce in us a more earnest and successful effort to give them a more definite science ; and that, as Professor Smythe says, the “ returning spring will no longer renew the honours of the one,” whilst it will gradually evolve the development of the other.

The efforts, too, which the profession are already making, though, as we humbly consider,

not in the right direction, will certainly arrive in time at a path that is more auspicious. When we see the hydropathist looking so much to the skin, homœopathy leading people to think of *quantities* of medicine; when, in the regular profession, we see one man restricting his views to one organ, another to another, a third thinking that *everything* can only be learnt by examination of the dead, thus confounding morbid anatomy with pathology—a fourth *restricting* his labours to the microscope as if to discover laws by enlarging the objects rather than his intellectual vision; still we cannot but perceive that these isolated labours, if *once concentrated by unity of purpose and combined action*, would be shadowing forth at least the outline of a really inductive inquiry.

Hydropathy and homœopathy are making powerful uses too of the *argumenta ad crumenam*. Their professors are amassing very large sums of money, and that is an influence which will in time probably generate exertions, in favour of a more definite science. Still,

Medicine and Surgery cannot be formed into a science so long as men consider it impossible; nor can there be any material advance if they will persist in measuring the remedial powers of nature by their own power of educating them—a presumption obviously infinitely greater than the veriest quack ever dared to indulge in. Well did Lord Bacon see the real difficulties of establishing the dominion of an inductive philosophy when he laboured so much in the first place to destroy the influence of preconceived opinions—idols, as he justly called them.

You cannot, of course, write truth on a page already filled with conjecture. Nevertheless, mankind seem gradually exhausting the resources of Error: many of her paths have been trodden, and their misleading lures discovered, and by-and-bye that of Truth will be well-nigh the only one left untried. In the meantime we fear the science is nearly good enough for the age. The difficulty of advance is founded deeply in the principles of human nature. People know there are physical laws as well

as moral laws, and they may rely on it, that disobedience and disease, sin and death, are as indissolubly bound up with infractions of the one as well as the other.

It is true there are many who have (however unconsciously) discovered that the pleasures procured by the abuses of our appetites, are a cheat; and that permanent good is only attained by obeying those laws which were clearly made for our happiness.

Error has indeed long darkened the horizon of medical science; and albeit there have been lightnings like coruscations of genius from time to time, still they have passed away, and left the atmosphere as dark as before. At length, however, there has arisen, we hope, a small but steady light, which is gradually diffusing itself through the mists of Error, and which, when it shall have gained a very little more power, it will succeed in dispelling.

Then, we trust, Medicine will be seen in the graceful form in which she exists in nature; as a Science which will enable us to administer the physical laws in harmony with that moral code

over which her elder sister presides ; but whenever this shall happen, Surgery will recognize as the earliest gleams of light shed on her paths of inquiry, in aid of the progress of science and the welfare of mankind, the honoured contributions of John Hunter and John Abernethy.

CHAPTER XV.

“ Eheu fugaces Postume Postume
 Labuntur anni ; nec pietas moram
 Rugis et instanti senectæ
 Adferet, indomit que morti.”

HOR.

“ How swiftly glide our flying years,
 Alas ! nor piety nor tears
 Can stop the fleeting day ;
 Deep furrow'd wrinkles, frosting age,
 And Death's unconquerable rage,
 Are strangers to delay.”

FRANCIS.

WE have already observed that Abernethy had begun to feel the wear and tear of an anxious and active life, when, after a tenure of office for twenty-eight years assistant, he was

appointed surgeon to St. Bartholomew's Hospital. About this time he took a house at Enfield, where he occasionally went at leisure hours, on Saturday; and as the Spring Course of Lectures came near to a conclusion, and in the summer, pretty constantly on other afternoons. At this season he used to doff the black knee breeches, silk stockings, and shoes, sometimes with, sometimes without, short gaiters, and refresh one's rural recollections with drab kerseymeres and top-boots; in which costume he would at that season not unfrequently come down to lecture. He was fond of riding, and had a favourite mare he called Jenny; and many a time have we seen her jogging along on a fine summer afternoon, and her master looking as happy as any schoolboy that he was going home and escaping from the botherations of Bedford Row and the smoke of London.

Some years before this he met with what might have been a serious accident: in stooping forward, his horse threw up his head and struck him a violent blow on the forehead and nose; as Mr. Abernethy at first thought, breaking the

bones of the latter. He rode up a gateway, and having dismounted, was endeavouring to adjust the bruise and staunch the blood, when some people ran to assist him, and, as he said, very kindly asked him if they should fetch him a doctor; but, said Abernethy, "I told them I thought they had better fetch me a hackney coach," which they accordingly did. He was conveyed home, and in a short time recovered from the accident.

His taking the house at Enfield was probably a prudent measure, he seemed to enjoy it very much, and especially in getting a quiet friend or two down on the Saturday to stay over till the Monday; amongst whom, a very favourite visitor was our respected friend Mr. Clift, of whom we have already spoken. Abernethy had always, however, had what he used aptly enough to term a fidgetty nervous system. From early life he had been annoyed by a particularly irritable heart. The first time he ever suffered materially from it was while he was yet a young man. He had been exceedingly depressed by the death of a patient in whose

case he had been much interested, and his heart became alarmingly violent and disordered in its action. He could not sleep at night, and sometimes in the day it would beat so violently as to shake his waistcoat. He was afterwards, subject to fugitive returns of this complaint, and few, unless by experience, know how distressing such attacks are.

· We suspect that surgeons are more frequently thus affected than is generally supposed. A cold half-brutal indifference is one thing, but a calm and humane self-possession in many of our duties is another, and, as we saw in Cheselden, not obtained always without some cost; the effects of this sometimes appear only when the causes have ceased to recur, or are forgotten. A lively sensibility to impressions was natural to Abernethy, but this susceptibility had been increased by the well-known influence of the air and excitement of crowded cities on people who are engaged in much mental exertion. His physical organization, easily susceptible of disturbance, did not always shake it off again very readily. At one time he suffered an

unusually long time from the consequences of a wound in dissection.

These not uncommon accidents occur perhaps a hundred or a thousand times without being followed by any material results; but if they happen in disordered conditions of health, either of mind or body, they are sometimes serious affairs, and usually of a more or less active kind — that is, soon terminating in death or recovery. Not so in Abernethy. The complaint went through various phases, so that it was nearly three years, he used to tell us, before he fairly and finally got rid of the effects of it. One of the most difficult things for a man who was so actively engaged in a profession in London, as Abernethy was, is to get the requisite quantity of exercise, whilst the great mental exertion which characterizes a London, as distinguished from almost any other kind of life, requires that the digestive organs should be “up to” pretty good living.

Then again Abernethy lived in the days of port wine, when every man had something to say of the sample his hospitality produced of

this popular beverage. Abernethy, who was never intemperate, was very hospitable, and always selected the finest port wine he could get, which, as being generally full and powerful, was for him perhaps the least fitted.

Mr. Lloyd, of Fleet Street, who was one of the old-fashioned family wine-merchants, and one of the best men of his day, was the purveyor of his Falernian; and never was there a more correct application of nomenclature than that which gave to him the title, by which he was best known of "Honest John Lloyd." He was one of the kindest hearted men I ever knew, he had a great regard for Mr. Abernethy; and was treated himself by almost everybody as an intimate friend. One day I went there just as Abernethy had left. "Well," says Mr. Lloyd, "what a funny man your master is!" "Who?" said I. "Why Mr. Abernethy. He has just been here, and paid me for a pipe of wine; and threw down a handful of notes, and pieces of papers with fees. I wanted him to stop to see if they were right, 'For,' said I, 'some of these fees may be more than you think, perhaps.'

‘Never mind,’ said he, ‘I can’t stop; you have them as I took them,’ and hastily went his way.” .

Sedentary habits, however, as people now begin to find, do not harmonize well with great mental exertion, or constant and anxious occupation. In 1817, Abernethy felt his combined duties as surgeon to the hospital, as lecturer there, and also at the College, becoming too onerous, and therefore in that year resigned the Professorship. On this occasion, the Council sent him the following unanimous expression of their appreciation of his services.

At the Court of Assistants of the Royal College of Surgeons, in London, holden at the College on the 15th day of July, 1817.
Resolved unanimously:

“That the thanks of this Court be presented
“to John Abernethy, Esq., for the series of
“Lectures delivered by him in the theatre of
“this College in the years 1814, 1815, 1816,
“1817, with distinguished energy and perspi-

“ cuity ; by which he has elucidated the phy-
“ siological and pathological opinions of John
“ Hunter, explained his design in the formation
“ of the Hunterian Collection, illustrated the
“ principles of surgery, and thereby has highly
“ conduced to the improvement of anatomical
“ and physiological knowledge, the art and
“ science of surgery, and to the promotion of
“ the honour of the College.”

This seems to have gratified him, as under all the circumstances we can readily understand it might do ; and he accordingly replied to it as follows :

“ TO THE MASTER, GOVERNORS, AND COUNCIL OF THE
“ ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.

“ Sir and Gentlemen,

“ To obtain the good opinion of others is a
“ universal object of human actions ; and we often
“ strive to acquire it by circuitous and absurd
“ means ; but to obtain the approbation of eminent
“ and judicious characters by pursuing the direct
“ path of professional duty is the most gratifying

“ mode of seeking and receiving this object of
 “ general ambition.

“ I have ventured to premise these observa-
 “ tions to show you, gentlemen, that I do not write
 “ inconsiderately, or merely as a matter of form,
 “ when I thus return you my warmest thanks
 “ for the distinguished honour you have conferred
 “ on me by your public approbation of my *en-*
 “ *deavours** to discharge the duties of an arduous
 “ office, to which I was elected through your
 “ kindness and confidence.

“ I have the honour to remain,

“ Sir and Gentlemen,

“ Your very grateful and obedient servant,

“ JOHN ABERNETHY.”

We insert in this place a letter which he wrote about this time to Sir William Blizard, because it shows two things which are characteristic: the one, how constant he was in not allowing any considerations to interfere with the lectures; and the other, the endurance of his old attach-

* Underscored in the original.

ment to Sir William Blizard. It is an apology for not having been present at the Council.

“ Dear Sir William,

“ I was yesterday desired to see a patient
 “ residing seven or eight miles from London. I
 “ could not go that day, for it was lecture even-
 “ ing ; I cannot go to-morrow for the same
 “ reason, consequently I must go this evening.
 “ I hope you will consider these circumstances as
 “ an apology for my *absence* from the Board.

“ If you cite my example* as one misleading
 “ future Professors, be so good as to remember
 “ that I retired, leaving the task which I had
 “ undertaken incomplete, wherefore it became
 “ necessary to *explain publicly* to an indulgent
 “ audience my *motives* for resigning the Pro-
 “ fessorship.

“ I remain, dear Sir William,

“ Yours unremittingly,

“ JOHN ABERNETHY.”

* Apparently alluding to the impression it might create, that such a course was necessary.

Abernethy had at various periods of his life been subject to an inflammatory sore throat of a very active kind, which would on some days impede so as almost to prevent his swallowing, and then suddenly terminate in abscess, leaving him perfectly well again. He was young when these sorts of attack began, as in his lectures he used to speak of one of them having subsided only the night before he had some lectures to deliver before the Council of the College, when they were accustomed to meet in the Old Bailey.

The disposition, however, to disorder of the digestive organs, and the tendency to the termination in inflammation of the mucous membrane of the throat, as he advanced in life, began to affect other structures and he became teased and subsequently greatly tortured by rheumatism. This term—which is a kind of general name for various conditions of joints very different from each other—is in many cases, as we all know, extremely painful; and is never more excruciating than when parts thus conditioned are affected by spasm. These spasms were a source of much acute

suffering to Abernethy. His constant occupations gave him no opportunity of relieving himself from work, except there was that accommodation of indisposition to convenient times, which of course seldom happens.

In the earlier parts of his life, Abernethy, when he was out of health, would take the first opportunity which his occupations allowed of going a little way into the country; and there by diet, and amusing himself by reading and exercise, he would soon get well. But as he advanced in life, he was not so ready to attend to himself as perhaps he ought to have been. Besides, he would sometimes do things which incurred unnecessary risks, which we ourselves have sometimes ventured to mention to him.

Living at the time to which we are now alluding in Ely Place, and attending his lectures long after we had commenced practice, we frequently walked down with him to lecture; sometimes in the rain, when we used to think his knee breeches and silk stockings looked most uncomfortable. Besides this, he was very

careless about his umbrella; I never recollect him on such occasions calling a coach, and I hardly ever knew him come down to his evening lecture in his carriage. He generally came to the two o'clock lecture some minutes before the time; and as he often complained of cold feet, he would stand opposite one of the flue openings in the Museum. One day I ventured to suggest to him that the transition of temperature to the cold place he occupied in the theatre rendered this hardly prudent, when he said "Ay!" and moved away. Though temperate, without being very particular, in his diet, these other imprudences were unfortunate; because we saw him, every year almost, becoming troubled more and more by his painful visitor. The time, however, was now arriving when he was about to resign the Surgeoncy of the hospital.

We have seen that, when elected to that appointment he had been no less than twenty-eight years assistant surgeon, he, however, took no pains to indemnify himself for this long and profitless tenure of a subordinate post; but,

mindful of what he had himself suffered immediately on his appointment, he did the best he could at once to provide against others being subjected to such an unrequited service. He accordingly, on his election, addressed a letter to the governors of the hospital, of which we regret that we have not a copy. Our friend Mr. Lloyd, a friend and favourite pupil of Abernethy's, had a copy, and had kindly found it and laid it aside for us; but he unfortunately again mislaid it, and it cannot be found; neither is there a copy of it on the books of the hospital.

The object of the letter was to recommend some alterations in the arrangement of the duties of the surgeons of the hospital, and amongst other things, that they should resign at the age of sixty, with a retiring salary. Nothing could, we think, be more just or considerate than such a proposal, and it came very well from Abernethy, who had just stepped into the lucrative appointment. The proposal, however, was not acted on; and it would appear that his successors, however much they may have at the time approved of the precept, have not

been in haste to follow Abernethy's example. There is little doubt that Abernethy's proposal was as just and considerate of the interests of all parties as it was in favour of those of science. We cannot think that any one who considers the matter without prejudice can be of any other opinion.

The absence, however, of any law on the subject, made no difference to Abernethy; he had expressed his own intention of resigning at the age of sixty, and when that time arrived he accordingly did so. The governors, however, would not on that occasion accept his resignation, but requested him to continue. This he did for about another year, when, in 1827—having been elected in 1815—he finally resigned the hospital in the following letter, addressed to the President of the Hospital :

“ St. Bartholomew's Hospital,

“ July 24, 1827.

“ Finding myself incompetent to discharge
“ the duties of surgeon to your Hospital in a
“ satisfactory manner, and having led my junior

“ to believe that I should resign my office at a
 “ certain period of my life, I hereby tender my
 “ resignation accordingly. At the same time, I
 “ beg leave to assure the Governors of my grati-
 “ tude for their appointment to the offices which
 “ I have held under them, and for the good
 “ opinion and confidence which they have mani-
 “ fested towards me. I annex a draft for £100
 “ for the use of the Hospital.

“ I am, dear Sir,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ JOHN ABERNETHY.

“ To Rowland Stephenson, Esq.”

At the next meeting of the “ Court ” of Governors, it was proposed by Dr. Latham, and seconded by Mr. Wells, and unanimously resolved :

“ That this Court accept with great regret
 “ the resignation of Mr. Abernethy as one of its
 “ Surgeons, an office which he has discharged
 “ with consummate ability for forty years ; and

“ the Court offers him their best, their most
“ unanimous, and warmest thanks for his very
“ long and important services.

“ July 25, 1827.”

There is something significant in this vote of thanks, merging his long period of assistant surgeon in the general expression of his services as surgeon. It is very suggestive of the influence which had been felt from the presence of his master mind, although so long in a position which necessarily restricted its useful energies in regard to hospital matters. We have little doubt that, had Abernethy become surgeon to the hospital at a time of life when his physical energies were unimpaired, he would have suggested many improvements on the system ; but with little real power in this respect, and with men who were opposed to him, he was just the last man in the world to commence a crusade against the opinions of those with whom he was associated. The moment he became surgeon, we see him endeavouring to remove an

evil from which he had greatly suffered, and which is obviously a most undesirable state of things—namely, that men should so often arrive at a post in which their active energies are most required, at a time of life when those energies have been perhaps necessarily addressed to other objects, have become weary with hope deferred, or already on the wane.

He was, also, very averse to so spacious a portion of the hospital being devoted to the festive meetings of the Governors; and on showing it, would sometimes go so far as to say, “Ay, this is what I call the useless portion of the hospital.” He continued to lecture another year, when he resigned the lectures, and in 1829 his appointments at the College of Surgeons also.

In May, 1829, he wrote to Mr. Belfour, the Secretary of the College of Surgeons (whose politeness and attention in facilitating our inquiries at the College we are happy thus publicly to acknowledge) as follows:

“ My dear Sir,

“ Early in April the thermometer was above
“ 70°, and I had so violent a relapse of rheuma-
“ tism, that I have not been able (nor am I now
“ able) to leave this place since that time. Apo-
“ logize to the President, therefore, for my non-
“ attendance on Monday. *Entre nous*, as I
“ think I shall not be able to perform the duties
“ of those situations which I now hold at the
“ College, I think of resigning them ; yet I will
“ not decide till I have talked with Clift* upon
“ that subject, and have heard your opinion upon
“ it. If he could come down this or the
“ following Saturday, I should be glad to see
“ him.

“ I remain, my dear Sir,

“ Yours very sincerely,

“ JOHN ABERNETHY.

“ Enfield, May 21,

“ To Edmund Belfour, Esq.”

* Our excellent Conservator at that time, of whom we have already spoken, and a great favourite of Abernethy's.

He accordingly, in July of 1829, resigned his seat at the Court of Examiners, when the following Memorial was sent him by the Court of Examiners.

At the College, at the Court holden on Friday, the 17th of July, 1829—

Present : Mr. Thomas, President ; Mr. Headington, Mr. Keate, Vice-Presidents ; Sir William Blizard, Mr. Lynn, Sir A. Cooper, Bart., Sir A. Carlisle, Mr. Vincent, and Mr. Guthrie.

Resolved, that the following Memorial be entered in the minutes of this Court :

“ Conscious of having been enlightened by
 “ the scientific labours of Mr. Abernethy ; con-
 “ vinced that teachers of anatomy, physiology,
 “ and of surgery (and consequently their pupils)
 “ have derived most important information
 “ from these sources of knowledge ; and im-
 “ pressed that the healing art has been emi-
 “ nently advanced by the writings of that
 “ excellent individual ; the members of the
 “ Court of Examiners lament the tendered

“ resignation of an associate so endowed, and
“ whose conduct in the Court has always been
“ so exemplary.

“ Resolved also, that a copy of the foregoing
“ Memorial be delivered by the Secretary to Mr.
“ Abernethy.”

He had by this time become a great sufferer—walked very lame; and this difficulty interfering more than ever with his exercise, no doubt tended to make matters worse. He consulted nobody, I believe, but his old friend Dr. Roberts, of St. Bartholomew's. He was induced to go for some time into the country; and on his return, hearing that he was again in Bedford Row, and not having seen him for some time, I called on him one morning about eleven o'clock.

I knew that he had been very ill, but I was not in the least prepared to see him so altered. When I was shown into his room, I was so struck with his appearance, that it was with difficulty I concealed the emotion it occasioned;

but I felt happy in observing that I had succeeded.

He appeared, all at once as it were, to have become a very old man—he was much thinner; his features appeared shrunk. He had always before worn a good deal of powder; but his hair, which used to hang rather thickly over his ears, was now thin, and, as it appeared to me, silvered by age and suffering.

There was the same expressive eye which I had so often seen lit up by mirth or humour, or animated by some more impassioned feeling, looking as penetrating and intellectual as ever, but with a calmness and languor which seemed to tell of continued pain, and which I had never seen before. He was sitting at a table on a sort of stool, as it appeared to me, and had been seeing patients, and there were still several waiting to see him. On asking him how he was, his reply was very striking.

It was indeed the same voice which I had so often listened to with pleasure, but the tone was exceedingly changed. It was the subdued character which is expressive of recent suffering,

and sounded to me most mournfully. "Ay," said he, "this is very kind of you—very kind indeed!" and he somewhat distressed me by repeating this several times, so that I hardly knew what to reply. He said he was better, and that he could now walk pretty fairly again, "as," said he, "you shall see."

He accordingly slowly dismounted from his seat, and with the aid of two sticks began to walk, but it was a melancholy sight to me. I had never seen him nearly so lame before.

I asked him what he was going to do; he said that he was going to Enfield on the morrow, and that he did not think he should return. I suggested that he might possibly try a drier air with more advantage; that I feared Enfield might be a little low and damp, and not, possibly, the best place for him. "Well," he said, "anything is better than this." I very shortly after took my leave, not sorry to be again alone, for I felt considerably depressed by the unexpected impressions I had received from this interview. It was too plain that his powers

were rapidly waning. He went to Enfield on the following day (a Wednesday, I think) and never returned again to practice. He lingered about another year, during which time I once went to see him, when I found him something better. He was able to see his friends occasionally, and at times seemed to rally. In the spring, however, of 1831, he gradually got weaker, and died on the 20th of April in that year.

He perfectly retained his consciousness to the last; and, as I understood, died as tranquilly as possible. There was nobody in the room with him at the moment but his servant, to whom he said: "Is there anybody in the room?" His servant replied "No, Sir." Abernethy then laid his head back, and in a few seconds expired. His body was not examined; but from the history and symptoms of his case, there could be little doubt that there would have been found organic changes in which the valvular structures of the heart had more or less participated.

He was buried in the parish church of

Enfield. The funeral was a private one; and there is a plain tablet on the wall over his grave, with the following inscription :

H. S. E.

JOHANNES ABERNETHY, R. S. S.

REGII CHIRURGORUM COLLEGII QUONDAM PRÆSES.

QUI INGENIO, PROBITATE, BENIGNITATE.

EXIMIE PRÆDITUS

ARTEM MEDICAM PER ANNOS PLURIMOS

SUMMA CUM DILIGENTIA, SOLERTIA, FELICITATE

COLUIT, EXERCUIT, DOCUIT, AUXIT

ET SCRIPTIS HOC MARMORE PERENNIOREBUS

POSTERITATI TRADIDIT.

MORBO DEMUM GRAVISSIMO CONFECTUS

CUJUS ANGORES HAUD ALITER DOMANDOS

PIO ET CONSTANTI ANIMO SUBEGIT.

CONJUGI LIBERIS, AMICIS, DISCIPULIS

HUMANO GENERI, CUI TANTOPERE SUCCUBERAT

FLEBILIS

APRILIS DIE 20, A.D. 1831, ÆTATIS SUE 67.

PLACIDE IN CHRISTO OBDORMIVIT.

CHAPTER XVI.

“Est enim animus cælestis et quasi demersus in-
terram locum divinæ naturæ æternitatisque contrarium.”

—CICERO.

It has been stated by an acute observer that it was impossible for any man to be with Abernethy, even for a short time, without feeling that he was in communion with no common mind; and it was just, I think, the first effect he produced. In person, he was of middle stature, and well proportioned for strength and activity. He had a most interesting countenance; it combined the character

of a philosopher and a philanthropist, lighted up by cheerfulness and humour. It was not that his features were particularly well formed or handsome, though there was not a bad one in the whole countenance; but the harmony of composition (if we may be allowed the expression) was so perfect.

A sufficiently high and ample forehead towered over two of the most observant and expressive eyes I almost ever saw. People differ about colour; they appeared to me always of a greyish-blue, and were characterized as the rule by a mirthful yet piercing expression, from which an overlaying of benevolence was seldom wanting; yet, as we have before observed, they would sometimes launch forth gleams of humour, anger, or pathos, as the case might be, which were such as the term dramatic can alone convey.

There was another expression of his eye which was very characteristic; it was when his benevolence was excited without the means of gratifying it, as would sometimes happen in the

case of hospital patients, for whom he wanted good air, and things which their position did not allow them to procure. He would in this case step a pace or two from the bed, throw his head a little aside, and, talking to the dresser, exhibit an expression of deep feeling, which was extremely peculiar; it was a mixture of suffering, of impatience and sympathy; but the force which the scene drew from the dramatic character of his expressive countenance is entirely lost in the mere relation. If, at such times, he gave utterance to a few words, they were always extremely touching and expressive. On an occasion, for example, like the following, these characters were combined. A woman came into the hospital to have an operation performed; and Abernethy, as was his invariable custom, took some time to get her health into a more favourable condition. When the day for the operation was at hand, the dresser informed him that she was about to quit the hospital.

“Why, my good woman,” said Abernethy, “what a fool you must be to come here to have

an operation performed ; and now, just as you are in a fit state for it, to go out again." Somebody here whispered to him that her father in the country "was dying." With a burst of indignation, his eyes flashing fire, he turned to the dresser, and said : "You fool, why did you not tell me this before?" Then, after a moment or two looking at the patient, he went from the foot up to the side of the bed, and said in the kindest tone possible : "Yes, my good woman, you shall go out immediately ; you may come back again when you please, and I will take all the care I can of you."

Now there was nothing in all this perhaps, but his manner gave it immense force ; and I remember one of the old pupils saying to me : "How kind he was to that woman ; upon my soul, I could hardly help crying."

Abernethy exemplified a very rare and powerful combination of intellectual qualities. He had a perception of the facts of a subject at once rapid, penetrating, and comprehensive, and a power of analysis which immediately

elicited their more important relations, to the immediate objects of the investigation, a power of course of the utmost value in a practical profession.

This faculty was never more marvellously displayed than sometimes in doubtful or difficult cases; and this had been always a striking excellence in him, even when a young man. I recollect hearing my father say, that to see Abernethy to advantage, you must observe him when roused by some difficulty, and in a case where other men were at fault or puzzled. It was just so; his penetrating mind seemed to remove to either side at once what was foreign or doubtful, and go straight to the point with which alone he had to grapple. Allied to this, if not part of it, was that suggestive power which he possessed in so remarkable a degree, and which by a kind of intuition seemed to single out those pertinent relations and inquiries, which the judgment is to examine, and reject or approve as the case may be; a faculty absolutely necessary to success in endeavours at extending the boundaries of a

science. He was thus sometimes enabled, as we have seen, to convert facts to the highest purposes, in aid of practical improvement, which, with an ordinary observer, would have passed unnoticed.

These qualities, combined with a memory, as we have seen, peculiarly ready, capacious, and retentive, placed his means at once at hand for practical application. Then, while his quick perception of relation always supplied him with abundant analogies, his imaginative faculty enabled him to illustrate, enforce, and adorn them with such a multitude and variety of illustration as seemed well-nigh inexhaustible.

Of his humour we have already spoken ; but the same properties which served him so well in more important matters were really, as it appears to us, the foundation of much of that humour by which his conversation was characterized—we mean his quick perception of relation, and his marvellously retentive memory. Many of the things that he said, “told,” not because they were original so much as that

they were ready at hand ; not because they were intrinsically good, as so apposite in application ; and lastly, because they were further assisted by his inimitable manner. Nevertheless, sometimes, his quick perception would be characterized by a corresponding felicity of expression. Bartleman was an intimate friend of Abernethy's ; and those who remember the magnificent voice, and peculiarly chaste style of that celebrated singer, will appreciate the felicity of the expression applied to him by Abernethy, when he said, " Bartleman is an orator in music "

Abernethy had the talent of conveying by his manner, and apparently without the smallest effort, that which in the drama is scarcely known but as the result of constant and careful study. It was a manner which no analysis of his character can convey, of which none of his own compositions even give an adequate idea. The finest colours are often the most fugitive. This is just the case with that heightened expression which we term dramatic. Who can convey in words

the thrilling effect that an earnest, heartfull expression of a single phrase has sometimes conveyed. But brilliant as these endowments were, they were graced by moral qualities of the first order.

Quick as he was to see everything, he was necessarily rapid in his perception of character, and would sometimes at a glance hit on the leading influence of this always difficult assemblage of phenomena, with the same rapidity that marked his dealings with facts which were the more usual objects of his inquiries. But though quick in his perception of character, and therefore rapidly detective of faults, his views were always tempered by generosity and good sense. Indignant at injustice and oppression, and intolerant only of baseness or cruelty, he was kind and charitable in his construction of more common or excusable failings.

He loved man as his brother, and with enlarged ideas of the duties of benevolence, never dispensed it as a gift which it was creditable to bestow, so much as an obligation which

it would have been immoral to have omitted. It was not that he did anything which the world calls noble or great in giving sums of money to this or that person. There were, indeed, plenty of instances of that sort of generosity and benevolence, which would creep out in spite of him, from those whom he had benefited; and no man knew how to do it better. A gentleman, for example, came up from the country to the school, and went to Bedford Row, to enter the lectures. Abernethy asked him a few questions about his intentions and his prospects, and found that his proceedings would be a little doubtful, as they were contingent on the receipt of some funds which were uncertain. Abernethy gave him a perpetual ticket to all his own lectures; "And what made so much impression on me," said the gentleman, "was that instead of paying me less attention, in asking me to his house, than the other pupils, if there was any difference, he paid me rather more." We have seen this gentleman within a few days, and we are happy to say, he has had a happy and prosperous career.

The benevolence, however, to which we allude, was not merely shown in giving or remitting money; that, indeed, would be a marvellously overcoming of the world with many people, but not with Abernethy; his benevolence was no fitful suggestion of impulse, but a steadily glowing principle of action, never obtrusive, but always ready when required. It has been said, "a good man's life is a constant prayer." It may be asserted, that a good surgeon's life should be a gentle stream of benevolent sympathies, supporting and distributing the conscientious administration of the duties of his profession. That this really intrinsic part of his character should have been occasionally overlaid by unkindness of manner is, indeed, much to be regretted; and, we believe, was subsequently deplored by no one more sincerely than himself, and those who most loved and respected him. The faults of ordinary acquaintances are taken as matter of course, but the errors of those who are the objects of our respect and affection are always distressing. We feel them almost

as a personal wrong, and in a character like Abernethy, where every spot on so fair a surface became luminously evident, such defects gave one a feeling of mortification which was at once humiliating and oppressive. But whilst we are the last to conceal his failings, we cannot but think he was, after all, himself the greatest sufferer ; we have no doubt they originated, at least, in good motives, and that they have been charged, after all, with much good.

Unfortunately, we have at all times had too many Gnathos in our profession, too much of the
 “ Quidquid dicunt laudo, id rursum si negant, laudo id
 quoque,

Negat quis ? nego. ait ? aio.”

These assenting flatteries are the bane of an honest man, and under the name of tact, and the influence of an uncompromising ambition to get on, merge the highest duties into a mere desire to please ; and adopting the creed of Gnatho, appropriately arrive at the same climax as their conclusion.

“ Postremo imperavi egomet mihi
 Omnia assentari.”

Now Abernethy knew this well, and detested it with a repulsion deep and sincere. He had no knowledge of Gnathonics. He felt that he was called on to practise a profession, whose legitimate object was alone achieved when it ministered to real suffering; and that mere assentation to please patients was a prostitution of the highest qualities of mind to the lowest purposes. If one may so say, he felt like a painter who has a feeling for the highest department of his art, and who could see nothing in an assenting Gnathonicism but an immoral daub.

Neither was this without some use to others, for though he looked, as the public may be assured many others have done, on a "parcel of people who came to him with nothing the matter," yet even in his roughness he was discriminate, and sometimes accomplished more good than the most successful time-server by all his lubricity. One day, for example, a lady took her daughter, evidently most tightly laced, a practice which we believe mothers now are aware is mischievous, but scarcely to the extent known to

medical men. She complained of Abernethy's rudeness to her, as well she might; still he gave her, in a few words, a useful lesson. "Why, Madam," said he, "do you know there are upwards of thirty yards of bowels squeezed underneath that girdle of your daughter's. Go home and cut it, let Nature have fair play, and you will have no need of my advice."

But if we must acknowledge and regret, as we do, his occasional rudenesses of manner, let us also give him the credit of overcoming these besetting impulses. In all Hospitals, of course, there are occasional vexations, but who ever saw Abernethy really unkind to a hospital patient? Now we cannot affirm anything beyond our own experience. We had, as dresser, for a considerable period the care of many of his patients, and we continued frequently to observe his practice from the commencement of our pupilage, which was about a year, or a little more, after his appointment as surgeon until the close of his hospital labours. We speak subject to correction, therefore, but we cannot charge our memory with a single in-

stance of unkindness to a hospital patient ; whilst we are deeply impressed by the constant prevalence of a generally kind and unaffected sympathy with them.

The quickness with which he observed any imperfection in the execution of his directions, was, on the contrary, the source of many a "rowing," as we apprehend some of his dressers well enough remember ; whilst he seldom took a dresser without making more than usual inquiries as to his competency. In private practice, also, any case that really required skill and discrimination was pretty sure to meet with the attention that it deserved. This was noticed in the remarks made on the character of Abernethy at the time of his death, by the Duke of Sussex, at the Royal Society, at their anniversary meeting on the 30th of November, 1831, of which the following is a report, copied from the books of the Society—

His Royal Highness observed that "Mr. Abernethy was one of those pupils of John Hunter, who appears the most completely

“ to have caught the bold and philosophical
 “ spirit of his great master. He was the author
 “ of various works and memoirs upon physio-
 “ logical and anatomical or surgical subjects,
 “ including papers which have appeared in our
 “ Transactions. Few persons have contributed
 “ more abundantly to the establishment of the
 “ true principles of surgical and medical science
 “ in those cases which require that minute
 “ criticism of the symptoms of disease, upon the
 “ proper knowledge and study of which the
 “ perfection of medical art must mainly depend.

“ As a lecturer, he was not less distinguished
 “ than as an author ; and he appears to have
 “ attained the art of fixing strongly the attention
 “ of his hearers, not less by the just authority of
 “ his opinions than by his ready command of
 “ apt and forcible illustrations. He enjoyed
 “ during many years of his life more than an
 “ ordinary share of public favour in the practice
 “ of his profession ; and though not a little
 “ remarkable for the eccentricities of his manner,
 “ and an affected roughness in his intercourse
 “ with his ordinary patients, he was generally

“ kind and courteous in those cases which
 “ required the full exercise of his skill and
 “ knowledge, and also liberal in the extreme
 “ when the infliction of poverty was superadded
 “ to those of disease.”

The high character of his benevolence was shown also in the ready forgiveness of injuries ; and he was as grateful as he was forgiving. How constant his attachment to his early friend, and teacher, Sir William Blizard. There is something very characteristic of this when, in the decline of life, he writes “ Your’s unremittingly,” to one whose unusually lengthened years had enabled him to witness Abernethy’s entry into life, and at the conclusion of the labours of his distinguished pupil, to join with a public body in expressing the high sense entertained of the obligations which he had conferred on science and mankind. Few men could have been placed in positions more trying than that in which he found himself in his controversy with Mr. Lawrence. When, the time arrived at which, in the

ordinary course, that gentleman would have been elected into the Council of the College, there was a very strong feeling on the part of some of the members against his admission. Abernethy, however, proposed him himself, and it was by his casting vote that the election terminated in Mr. Lawrence's favour.

A member of the Council having expressed his surprise that Mr. Abernethy should propose a gentleman with whom he had had so unpleasant a difference—"What has that to do with it?" rejoined Abernethy. Some friends of Mr. Lawrence wished to pay that gentleman the compliment of having his portrait drawn, and a subscription was to be entered into for this purpose. It was suggested that it would be very desirable to get Mr. Abernethy to allow his name to be in the list; and our friend, Mr. Kingdon,* with the best intentions no doubt, ventured to ask Mr. Abernethy to

* An old and respected pupil of Abernethy's, whose merits, as an excellent man and kind-hearted professional brother, we are happy thus publicly to acknowledge.

put his name at *the head* of the list. But there was nothing of Quixotism in Abernethy. He would have been very glad to do a kind thing to anybody; and any obstacle affecting him personally, was much more likely to be an argument in favour than otherwise. He liked justice for its own sake, but he was circumspect, as well as penetrative. At first he seemed inclined to do it, but asked a day to consider of it; and then wrote the following letter, into a more particular examination of which we need not enter:—

“1828—9.

“ My dear Sir,

“ ‘*Fiat Justitia*’ is, as I flatter myself, the
 “ rule of my conduct. At all times have I
 “ expressed my approbation and respect for
 “ William Lawrence, on account of his profes-
 “ sional learning, and of his ability as a writer
 “ and public speaker. But if I do what you
 “ would have me, I shall do much more, and
 “ be made to appear as a leader in a scheme,

“ the object of which is indefinite ; so that per-
 “ sons will be at liberty to put what construc-
 “ tion they please upon my conduct. Being
 “ desirous of doing what you wish, I have been
 “ for some time in a state of perplexity and
 “ hesitation.

“ At length I have resolved, that since I
 “ cannot determine what ought to be done, to
 “ follow a useful rule of professional conduct,
 “ and to do nothing. Vexed, to refuse you
 “ anything, I hope that you will still believe me,

“ My dear Sir,

“ Your obliged and very sincere friend,

“ JOHN ABERNETHY.”

As a companion, Abernethy was most agreeable and social, in the true sense of the word, that is, not gregarious. Naturally shy, numbers neither suited his taste nor his ideas ; but the society of his family, or a few social friends with whom he could feel unreserved, was his greatest pleasure.

On such occasions, when in health, he would be the life and joy of his circle. There never was, perhaps, any one more ministered to by an enduring affection whilst living, nor in regard to whose memory the regrets of affection have been more combined with the hallowing influences of respect and veneration. At home, he would sometimes be as hilarious as a boy; at other times he would lie down on the rug after dinner, and either chat or sleep away the short time that his avocations allowed him to give to that indulgence. Occasionally he would go to the theatre, which he sometimes enjoyed very much; like his brother, he was a great lover of our immortal Shakespeare, and scarcely less familiar with most of the wonderful creations of his mighty genius.

When we contemplate Abernethy in a single phase only of his character, we see a "fidgetty" physical organization, influencing an habitual irritability of which it was too much a supporter if it were not the original cause; but the moment we penetrate this thin and only oc-

casional covering, we meet with nothing but rare and splendid endowments; and as we proceed in our examination, we are at a loss which most to admire, the brilliant qualities of his intellect, or the moral excellences of his heart.

But in estimating the one or the other, we must view them in relation to the other feelings with which they were accompanied, as impeding or assisting their development and application; or otherwise, we shall hardly estimate in its due force the powers of that volition, over which the moral sense so constantly presided.

Abernethy had considerable love of approbation—a quality which, regarded in a religious point of view, may be said to embrace all others, but it is also one which, in the ordinary relations of life, is apt to dilute the character, bringing down the mind from the contemplation of more elevated motives to the level of those suggested by worldly considerations and conventionalisms. To one shy even to timidity, and whose organization fitted him rather for the

rapid movements of a penetrative and impulsive perception than the more dogged perseverance of sustained labour, love of approbation, even in the ordinary application of it, might have been a useful stimulus in maintaining exertion ; and we believe it was. Yet, though he avowed it as a dominant principle in our nature, as the great "incentive" to human action, he never sought it but by legitimate channels ; nor, potential as its influences might have been, when sharpened by shyness and timidity, did he hesitate one moment to throw them all aside whenever the interests of truth or justice rendered it necessary.

When Mr. Hunter's views were little noticed, less understood, and apparently in danger of being forgotten ; when the more speculative of his views were not even known as his by any *published* documents ; when, therefore, in addition to other objections, he was, as we have seen, subjected to the imputation of advocating opinions as Hunter's, of which there were no other proofs, than the precarious testi-

mony of contemporaries; he stood boldly forward as the fearless, earnest, and eloquent advocate of John Hunter. In this cause, he overcame his natural dislike to contest and publicity, and encountered just that individualizing opposition which is most trying to a sensitive organization; exemplifying a rare tribute of truth and justice paid by genius to the claims of a departed brother. At the same time, the power he displayed of moulding views, scarcely even acknowledged, into the elementary beginnings of little less than a new science, strikingly testifies the superiority of his intellectual power.

Whilst, however, he advocated John Hunter's views, and, with a creative spirit, made them the basis of additional structures which were emphatically his own, we find him modestly reverting again and again to John Hunter, as if afraid of not awarding him his just due; and for ever linking both the early bud put forth by Hunter's inquiries, and the opening blossom afforded by his own, with the imperishable

efforts of his distinguished master ; exemplifying the modesty of genius, and how superior it is when guided by virtue, to any but the most exalted motives.

Another example of his independence of mind, and of his conquest over difficulty when the interests of truth appeared to him to render it necessary, was the manner in which, in defiance of ridicule and all sorts of opposition, he advocated his own views ; with ultimate success, it is true, but obtained only through a variety of difficulties, greatly augmented by his naturally shy if not timid organization. Still, amidst all his brilliant endowments, we feel ourselves fondly reverting to the more peaceful and unobtrusive efforts with which he daily inculcated the conscientious study of an important profession.

That he had faults, is of course true ; but they were not the faults of the spirit so much as of the clay-bound tenement in which it resided ; not so much those of the individual man as those necessarily allied to humanity. The

powerful influences of education had not been very happily applied in Abernethy; its legitimate office is no doubt to educe the good, and suppress the evolution of bad qualities. In Abernethy, we can hardly help thinking that his education was more calculated to do just the contrary. "To level a boy with the earth," because he ventured on "a crib to Greek Testament," is, to say the least of it, very questionable discipline for a shy and irritable organization. To restore to its original form the tree which has been bent as a sapling, is always difficult or impossible.

But in virtue of those beneficent laws which "shelter the shorn lamb," Abernethy was allowed ultimately, less in consequence than in spite of his education, to develop one of the most benevolent of dispositions. To this was joined a powerful conscientiousness, which pervaded everything he did, and which could hardly be supported but by sentiments of religious responsibility; and we believe that his mind was deeply imbued with the precepts of a vital Christianity that took the most practical

view of his duty to God and to his neighbour ; and in the very imperfect sense in which human nature has ever attained to the full obedience of either, he regarded a humble and practical observance of the one as the best human exposition of the other. His favourite apothegm on all serious occasions, and especially in those parts of his profession where its guidance was most required, was the divine precept of doing to others as we would wish done to ourselves. His ancestors had been eminent divines, and one of them a distinguished writer, and had attached themselves to what I believe is understood by the term "High Order of Unitarians;" but I have no reason to believe that Abernethy differed from those tenets which are held by the Church of England.

In concluding this imperfect sketch of a difficult character, we have merely endeavoured to state our own impressions. We cannot help thinking that Abernethy has left a space which yet remains unoccupied ; it would be presumptuous to say that it will long continue so. In his life he has left us an excellent

example to follow, nor has it been less useful in teaching us that which we should avoid.

Whilst amongst us, as he taught us how to exercise some important duty, he would occasionally endeavour to impress matters of detail, by showing first how they should not be done. His life instructs us after the same manner. In all serious matters, we may generally take him as a guide; in occasional habits, we may most safely recollect that faults are no less faults—as Mirabeau said of Frederick—because they have the “shadow” of a great name; and we believe that, were it possible, no good man would desire to leave a better expiation of any weakness, than that it should deter others from a similar error. This is the view we would wish our young friends to take of the matter. We cannot all reach the genius of Abernethy, but we may be animated by the same spirit.

If great men are endowed with powers given only to the few, their success generally turns on the steady observance of the more homely qualities which are the common property of the

many—caution, circumspection, industry, and humility. Again, genius is often charged with weaknesses by which mere ordinary minds are unfettered or unembarrassed. We may emulate the justice, the independence of mind, the humanity, the generosity, the modesty, and, above all, the conscientiousness of Abernethy, in all serious cases; without withholding from the more ordinary and lighter duties of our profession a due proportion of these feelings, or necessarily laying aside that forbearance and courtesy which must ever lend an additional grace to our various duties.

We may endeavour with all our power to avoid a disgraceful flattery and compliancy without replacing them by contrasts which, though not equally mischievous, we may be assured are equally unnecessary: whilst we may in our various stations emulate his kindness, his constancy as a husband, father and friend; and yet not refuse a becoming share of such endearing qualities to others, from any fear that we shall be subject to misconstruction.

We may remember that intellect alone is dry,

cold, and calculating ; that feeling unsupported or uncontrolled is impulsive, paroxysmal, and misleading ; and that the few rare moments of moral excellence which human nature achieves are when these powers combine in harmony of purpose and unity of action.

We may be assured that, however much we admire that rapid and searching perceptivity ; that sound, acute, and comprehensive judgment which Abernethy brought to bear on the study of the profession ; or the honourable, independent, generous, and humane manner in which he administered its more important and serious duties ; that the greatest, and, for good, the most potential influence of all, was the manner in which he employed his manifold and varied excellences as a teacher in infusing a truly conscientious spirit into the numbers who, as pupils, he sent forth to practise in all parts of the world. This is still an unknown amount of obligation. Those resulting from his works may be proximately calculated, and such as are necessarily omitted in a review essentially popular, *may be chronicled hereafter in a more*

suitable manner ; but as a teacher, we cannot as yet calculate the amount of our obligations to him. They are only to be estimated by reflection, and by recollecting the *moral influence of every man* who honestly practises an important profession.

Finally, whether we think of the interests of the public, the profession, or those of each as affecting the other, or of both as affecting the progress of society, we shall, I think, be disposed to agree with one of our most distinguished modern writers, that the “means on which the interests and prospects of society most depend, are the sustained influence that invariably attends the dignity of private virtue.”

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