

PARVIN (*Theoph.*)

A D D R E S S

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY

OF

I N D I A N A ,

IN INDIANAPOLIS, NOVEMBER 18th, 1862.

BY

T H E O P H I L U S P A R V I N , M . D . ,

P R E S I D E N T O F T H E S O C I E T Y ,

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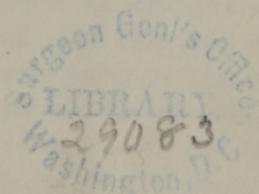
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PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

BY T. PARVIN, M. D., INDIANAPOLIS, IND.

Art is long; life is short. True, and appropriate to us at this time, these words of the divine old man of Cos. Is not life short? Familiar faces rarely absent from our annual meetings, we behold no more. Three at least of our number, and, how strange the fatality! all three from this city, who were with us when we last convened, have passed away forever from earthly scenes. One of these was in the morning, comparatively, of professional life, esteemed by all who knew him; another past the meridian, not, indeed, of professional life, but of the usual period of earthly existence, yet in his robust stalworth form promising a score of years in active labor,—enviable eminence and success were his; his a character rock-like in its firmness and integrity, his a heart child-like in its simplicity and earnestness; the third well on to the sunset hour of life, unto whom there belonged somewhat of patriarchal character, the oldest practitioner probably in the State, certainly in this part of it, and who was worthy of patriarchal respect—past his three score years and ten, unobtrusive almost to reserve, he went his way with that quiet dignity which is inseparable from worth, a judicious physician and an unwavering friend. Clay Brown, Charles Parry, and Livingston Dunlap are with us no more. Often the victors for others in the struggles with disease, they themselves are vanquished, and after life's fitful fever sleep well in that grave which is our common heritage. By the bond of a common suffering, one life and one end thereof—disease, death, the grave, standing in the pathway of each—how closely, how firmly our hearts should be knit together so that no jealousy, or passion, or personal resentment might ever find place for exercise, or power, even temporarily to estrange members of one guild and one brotherhood.

By the bond of a common suffering, our souls should be quick with intelligent, active sympathy, for all at whose bed-side we are

called to ply the resources of our divine art; unto us its chosen ministers, comes out of the depths of pain and peril the cry for help—and “age or youth, beauty or deformity, guilt or innocence, friendship or hatred, merge their distinctions in one common attribute,” human suffering appealing to human kindness and skill—freely as we have received, freely as we all shall need, let these be given.

Our art is long. Alas! long though it be, rich with the treasured facts of centuries, crowned with the labors of men among the most learned and noble of the race, that it should be so imperfect. But imperfect, unsatisfactory in many respects as we confess the healing art to be, we positively maintain, in opposition to the doubt expressed by Sir William Hamilton, in his review of Thomson’s *Life of Cullen*, when he asks, “Has the *practice* of medicine made a single step since Hippocrates?” that the advance in the successful treatment of disease, has been great and unequivocal, and that from the days of the famous Greek master unto the present, there has scarce been a century barren of important medical progress—medical auditors need no demonstration of such propositions.

Our art is long—long not merely in the past, but likewise in the future; it goes out into the coming ages unto higher attainments and larger power to bless the race.

The progress of medicine has been, will be, at times intermittent—has suffered, will suffer interruptions; the waves may now and then ebb, but only to gather greater volume—may flow hither and thither, driven this way and that by the force of conflicting theories, but only that some new truth may be born of the strife, as Venus of the sea-foam; and the physician, in reference to his chosen science, may heartily sing with Tennyson,

“For I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.”

To investigate the phenomena of medical progress, to deduce from these its laws, is matter of interest and value to every thoughtful mind, whether professional or non-professional.

The evolution of medicine—indeed of any science—is no result of chance causes, is not in the main subject to accidental directions, and terminates in no fortuitous results. It is time the blind god, chance, child of ignorance and superstition, should be cast out of all human affairs; the philosophic mind cannot be satisfied with any such unseen, unknown agency, but finds its true repose in an ever-deepening, ever-widening conviction of *law*, law constantly present, law

everywhere prevalent. Laws prevail as much in scientific as in physiological development. There is an ideal in the evolution of every science, as there is in that of every organism. The embryonic cell, endowed with life-force and certain life conditions being present, is unfolded into its appropriate type through various transformations according to definite laws—evolution proceeds as steadily and certainly as the stream flows from the fountain, or the light from the stars.

This process occurs in accordance with the requirements of the ideal type—it is the ideal clothing itself in the actual; in the fertilized germ resides the entire being, whether man or elephant, oak or lily, not *in actu* but *in posse*, as the old philosophers would say, not actually but potentially present as entire and ultimate organism. And the truth is the same in regard to science—in other words, as Herbert Spencer has so clearly demonstrated,* the law of physiological is the law of scientific development. It is not my design to illustrate this proposition; but in passing let me say, the more it is revolved, the more it will commend itself to thinking minds, and proof after proof will start up for its establishment. Likewise it is almost equally foreign to that design to discuss this great law of physiology in its application to medicine, to show that the development of the cell into the entire and perfect individual of its appropriate species, exhibits the evolution of medicine, by analogies too striking and numerous to be accidental. This much, however, must be said, medicine has its ideal, and starting from its simple cell-state, multiplies by division, increases in complexity, passing through successive stages of development, towards whatsoever perfection of type may be permitted to such human science.

The objects of medicine give us its ideal, and these are the preservation of health, the cure of disease, and the physical perfection of man.† The more nearly it attains these objects, is the evidence that it approximates its ideal—that its development approaches completion. But pause for a moment, and think how remote the ideal from the present actual. Is health preserved? We need not go far nor look long to ascertain; every day's professional experience tells us of reckless disregard of its prime laws, and often of its total loss. Is medicine equal to the cure of disease? There are times when

*First Principles.

†Renouard's History of Medicine.

we all stand powerless at the sick bed, watching the steady progress of illness to a fatal termination, a progress neither arrested or even retarded, by any agency we can invoke, and nought is left us but to mourn the inefficiency of our Art. Is man physically perfect? When we walk the streets of some crowded city, closely observant of all we meet, we know that the race is far from physical perfection,* expressing itself as it must in physical beauty and symmetry. Seldom do we see one who might represent the Apollo Belvidere, another the Venus Medicii, or the Madonna—no distributed fairness and fixed type of physical beauty, but often—how often let the doubter try—and I quote the eloquent words of Ruskin, evil diversity and terrible stamp of various degradation; features seamed with sickness, furrowed with care, dimmed by sensuality, convulsed by passion, pinched by poverty; bodies unsymmetrical, consumed with sloth, broken down by labor, tortured by disease, premature old age bearing in its bones the sins of youth, form and face no longer lifted up toward heaven, but earth-seeking, and frequent fearful examples of the iniquities of the fathers and mothers visited upon the children.

But notwithstanding the difficulties and discouragements which environ the present, notwithstanding the oft-repeated failures to accomplish the high ends of our calling, notwithstanding the ideal is at last and at best to be only approximately attained, none the less are we to labor for the growth of our science according to its laws, and for the perfection of our art.

Nor this alone:—We, as physicians, are the representatives of medicine—those with whom we are associated know our science and art by us as exponents. This representative character lays upon us a responsibility which is neither to be evaded, nor lightly esteemed. If we are equal to the responsibility, if we are faithful in the discharge of the duties thus imposed, it is well. But have we brought into the temple where we worship such qualities of head and heart as will constitute a suitable offering? Are we causing men to honor us, and, in honoring us, the Profession, to which we have consecrated all our energies and abilities? Is our culture, our growth in such direction as best to advance our chosen science, not merely in public esteem, but likewise in actual merit? Especially are we teaching, by example, the youth who look forward to be our coadjutors or suc-

*Modern Painters, by Ruskin.

cessors, the intrinsic nobleness of the physician's calling, the discipline of intellect, the thorough and constant culture of all our powers requisite therefor, and manifesting a spiritual life reverent amid sacred mysteries and humble under solemn responsibilities, but yet fervid with enthusiasm—an inspiration to all noble young hearts, kindling them with fervor and enthusiasm? When Imlac had recounted to the Prince the requisites for a poet, Rasselas replied: "Enough! thou hast convinced me that no human being can ever be a poet." And, possibly, when the qualifications and culture requisite for the practice of medicine are presented, the weak and timid soul may exclaim—"Enough! thou hast convinced me that no human being can ever be a physician." But it is better to elevate the medical standard too high, than submit to the frequently popular, and I fear sometimes professional, degradation of it. One of the most valuable of American authors, bearing, too, our professional title, in a recent work,* utters these words: "As for the medical profession, I tremble to think how many enter it because they have neither piety enough for preaching, nor brains enough to practice law." Into the question of relative piety it probably is unwise to enter—it would be ungracious at least—the moral effect might be bad even to claim equality in this regard with our clerical friends; nor will we venture upon a controversy with the legal profession—it is idle to argue with lawyers upon any subject—as to the respective number of ounces avoirdupois of cerebral matter each possesses in his brain-case, though we can justly assert that individual members of our profession have been proved to have a larger quantity of brains than those of any other calling—we except Cuvier, but surely he is nearer to us than he is to the lawyers—larger than one of the greatest generals, and one of the greatest statesmen of modern times,—the brains of Abercrombie and Dupuytren outweighed by some ounces those of Napoleon and Webster.

But all this we pass by, simply saying that they do injustice to medical science who imagine its great truths can be readily compassed by inferior minds—they do injustice to medical practice who think it a suitable field for second-rate abilities. Still no natural endowments, however great, will of themselves make a physician—there must be the necessary culture, both prior to and during the period of medical pupilage, and in the following years of professional

*"Lessons in Life," by Dr. Holland.

waiting and of professional working. Unfortunately our growth in recent times has taken place too much in one direction—our culture, both in the schools and in after life, has become partial, one-sided, and not resulting in the full and harmonious development of all our intellectual powers. A once prevalent medical school had as its fundamental maxim, “*ars medica tota in observationibus;*” and the spirit of this maxim is exemplified among many physicians at this day. Indeed, we all, now and then, meet with a practitioner of medicine who might be defined a being having his organs of special sense thoroughly cultivated, and nothing else—eye, ear, nose, taste, feeling perfect, and that is all; disease to him is like game to the well trained dog, bound to reveal itself by some sensible quality, and he hunts it most assiduously by trained instinct, ignoring altogether the help of cultivated reason.

We assist these media, by which our minds are placed in communication with the exterior world, with various artificial contrivances; every year, from the time of microscope and stethoscope in medicine, gives us some new instrument of observation terminating in *scope*, whether used for seeing or hearing; we distinguish the nicest shades of color, the least differences of sound; we invoke chemistry with test tubes, retorts and re-agents—we weigh, we measure, we analyze—we devoutly study all sensible qualities, all physical characters. And in all this we are right; but if we stop here, we are like the builder, mis-nomer for him as physician for us, who, gathering from the forest and from the quarry materials for an edifice, leaves them lying unfashioned and unconnected, a shapeless mass. Food the facts we gather are, food for a scientific organism, but no more its blood and brains and muscle, than the wheat in the field, and the ox in the stall, are blood and brain and muscle for our physical organism. The apple falling to the ground is nothing of itself, a fact millions of times occurring each year, millions of times observed; but to the philosophic mind of Newton it is everything, full of significance—it tells of a great law hitherto unknown, yet wide as the universe. We come back to a denial of the axiom of the Italian teacher; and because medical science is an actuality, and a higher medical science a possibility and a certainty, we claim that mere observation is not the entire medical art, but only a part thereof.

Partly, then, as a protest against the axiom, and the limited culture which it induces, let me present some of the *Advantages of*

Philosophic and Literary Culture to the Physician, in the promotion of medical science, and in the daily performance of his professional duties.

We belong to a liberal profession, to a learned profession; and the ideas involved in such terms embrace not merely education and knowledge of a strictly professional character, but something wider and larger. We must be *liberated* from ignorance and prejudice; we must drink *liberally*, not from a single spring, but from many fountains of knowledge; we must be *learned* not alone in medical text books, but in the world's best classics. "A physician," says Schiller, "whose horizon is bounded by an historical knowledge of the human machine, and who can distinguish terminologically and locally the coarser wheels of this piece of intellectual clock-work, may be, perhaps, idolized by the mob; but he will never raise the Hippocratic art above the narrow sphere of a mere bread-earning craft."

It is not merely as a means of intellectual culture, developing and strengthening the powers of the mind, producing clearness of thought and justness of reasoning, that the study of philosophy is of value to the physician, inestimable as that value is, but to understand medicine itself, a knowledge of philosophy is important. Aristotle had a juster conception of what was needed in this regard, than many of us at the present day, when he uttered these weighty words, "The Philosopher should end with Medicine, the Physician begin with Philosophy." "But philosophy and medicine have always been viewed independently of each other, and their mutual influence has never been taken into account in delineating the progress of either. The history of medicine is, in fact, a part, and a very important part, of the history of philosophy."* The former history, embracing descriptions of disease, as recorded by different observers, discoveries, systems of practice, medical theories, cannot, in its completeness, be understood without we can trace the progress of human thought, and grasp the philosophic spirit of different periods. Yet we need this knowledge, for, as Cicero has said, "Those who know not what has previously been written on a subject, always remain in a state of childhood." We must know, too, the cast of mind, the philosophic characters of our higher authors, if we would understand their teachings. According to Coleridge, every man is born a Platonist or an Aristotlean—these terms marking the two great divisions of the

*Sir Wm. Hamilton's Discussions on Philosophy and Literature.

world's thinkers. England and Scotland, for example, represent the two opposite poles of philosophy; inductive philosophy prevailing in the former, deductive in the latter. Sydenham may be taken as a type of the English philosophy in medicine; Cullen, on the other hand, is a true type of the Scotch; while John Hunter, a greater than either, a Scotchman by birth, but transplanted to English soil, and breathing an English atmosphere, unites the characteristics of the English and the Scotch minds. Some of Muller's physiological speculations exhibit the influence of the transcendental philosophy, nor is the philosophy of Condillac entirely absent in the investigations of Bichat. A recent work by Dr. Thomas Laycock,* a work which would be of value to every thinking physician, manifests no little infusion of the Platonic Philosophy. Other illustrations might be presented, did time permit.

Philosophy as embracing logic, is of special importance to the medical man, for, as Dr. Andrew Combe truly observes, "If there is one fault greater than another, and one source of error more prolific than another, in medical investigations, it is the absence of a consistent and philosophic mode of proceeding; and no greater boon could be conferred upon medicine, as a science, than to render its cultivators familiar with the laws or principles by which inquiry ought to be directed."

But again:—Remember that medicine is a science, and the simplest definition of science is a knowledge of laws; so far then as we have well ascertained, well defined laws in the progress of disease, and in the influence of remedial agents, so far is medicine a science. If we would increase its claim to such title, if we would elevate it, and understand its true philosophy, it must be by the investigation of the causes of the phenomena occurring within its domain, their classification, the laws which they observe, or, in other words, their natural order. It is generally acknowledged that the tendency, and allusion has been made to this in a previous part of this address, of cultivated minds at present, is to an increasing belief in the universality of law; and not only so, but to a belief in the approximating unity of law, the many becoming the few, the special limited laws cast aside for larger generalizations. It was when men walked in the darkness of nescience that they multiplied causes, peopled the

*Mind and Brain, or the Correlations of Consciousness. Edinburgh and London, 1860.

heavens, earth, air, and seas with divinities—agents of good or of evil, a god for every phenomenon even of diseases. “But science terminates the miracle, reaves the heavens of their divinities, and exorcises the universe.”

“The intelligible forms of ancient poets,
The fair humanities of old religions,
The power, the beauty, and the majesty,
That had their haunts in dale, or piny mountain,
Or forest, by slow stream, or pebbly spring,
Or chasm, and wat’ry depths; all these have vanished,
They live no longer in the faith of reason.”*

As we emerge from the darkness of ignorance, as the light of science shines more clearly around us, phenomena are referred to their appropriate causes—a constant order, uniformity of sequence, in a word, law is found to prevail; and in regard to uninvestigated, or partially investigated phenomena, the scientific mind infers all these subject to law—Newton, though he had not by actual experiment and observation proved it, in regard to all objects, inferred the law of gravitation to be universal. We have no reason to believe that medicine will prove an exception to this subjection to law; indeed, lawless phenomena, in health or in disease, cannot be conceived by any intelligent mind—the currents of sickness are not accidental, there is no chance work in human maladies. It is true, we often grope in darkness, trying to feel our way, and the cause and course of morbid affections not fully discerned; nevertheless, as medicine advances, we shall know more and more of these, and pathology have more of definiteness and certainty. Nor is it unreasonable to believe that when such advance is made, the causes of disease will be found few and simple. Nature accomplishes many results, oftentimes too apparently very opposite ones, with few materials; she makes the diamond and the charcoal of the same substance; the opaque sclerotic and the transparent cornea are built up of the same tissue. Nay more, she accomplishes similar results by different agencies. The † formation of those complex molecules, known as fats, are not the exclusive prerogatives of the vegetable world, but likewise of the animal economy, and in this discovery of recent science, one more of those sharp lines of distinction between the great kingdoms in the organic world, in which man delights but nature abhors, is swept

* Wallenstein: Coleridge’s Translation.

† British and Foreign Medico-Chirurgical Review: October, 1862.

away. The great problem which she constantly presents is unity in variety, the one in the many. Mark the progress of physiological development—the single cell multiplying into an infinite number of cells, the simple becoming complex, the homogeneous heterogeneous; and then, by-and-by, organs formed, each one in the exercise of its appropriate function contributing to the sum total, the life of a perfect organism, an accomplished unity.

Again, consider what the doctrine of the cor-relation of forces teaches, making it highly probable that motion, chemical decomposition, light, heat, electricity, are modifications of a single agency, the forms many the cause one—the majority of sensible phenomena, possibly all, but the transmigrations of this all-working world-soul.

Nor is this all. Analogies are not wanting to render it probable that this subtle nerve-force, which works for and in the lordly brain, bearing messages thereto and mandates therefrom, moving quick as wing of angel or wave of light, may be still another form, differing widely, it is true, from electricity, for example, but not more widely than electricity does from motion or from heat. We know that certain chemical processes correlate all vital phenomena, whether motion or thought; that increased intellectual exertion can only be accomplished by an increased expenditure of phosphorus in the nervous tissue, just as much as greater muscular activity requires larger consumption of muscular tissue.

And if such generalizations as that which is foreshadowed by the known facts in regard to the cor-relation of forces can be made, does not the analogy render it probable that we shall greatly reduce our catalogue of diseases, and also their causes? Our physiology will be not merely of men, but of all animal life—not only so, but of all life, whether animal or vegetable; so too of our pathology, and the great underlying principles will be found few and simple.

There is need, then, if we would promote the evolution of medical science, that we should bring philosophic minds to the discovery of laws, ever seeking higher generalizations, casting away, in our progress thitherward, contingent and derivative laws for those which are constant and primitive. Especially does the present condition of medicine demand such work—we are confounded, oppressed by the multiplicity of facts, they crowd upon us in overwhelming confusion; let order be brought out of this chaos, light out of this darkness—let us study our facts, classify, organize them, and from such large inductions learn the laws of which facts are the mere expression.

Humboldt has said, "It is a certain test that much may yet be expected of a science when the facts and discoveries belonging to it still stand unconnected, and nearly without relation to each other—yea, even if they appear to be contradictory." These words, containing a truthful description of the status of medicine at the present time, are full of encouragement to its cultivators.

I cannot enlarge as I should desire upon the value of literary cultivation to the physician, if he would promote medical science—only a glance at a single aspect of the question will time permit. We all meet with physicians whose knowledge, derived from experience and reflection, is of great value, but who shrink from giving this permanent form in journal or book, from their difficulties in composition and defects of style; we all, too, can select books from our libraries, books sometimes of home, sometimes of foreign birth, valuable, but wearisome, obscure, hard to be understood, sometimes easy to be misunderstood, from improper use of words, from involved sentences, the plainest rules of rhetoric, possibly of grammar too, grossly violated. Literary study is necessary to acquire a good style. If a man would write well, he must associate with the best authors, familiarize himself with some of the world's choice literature, and he will learn to express his thoughts with the ease, the clearness, and the force he discovers in the works he reads.

But has philosophic and literary culture no beneficial effect upon the physician's daily usefulness and happiness? Will he not by such culture be better fitted for the discharge of his daily professional duties, and have more enjoyment in life? "The intelligent exercise of medicine requires not only a greater extent of scientific attainments, but also readier comprehensiveness of mind, and greater accuracy of thinking and maturity of judgment, than perhaps any other profession."* In this view of the question such culture is needed as a discipline.

But again: We live in two worlds, a material and a spiritual. We will not strike hands with those philosophers who deny an exterior world—making sensible things but the projections of our own minds; but let us be still farther from those other who make mind the mere result of organization—let us hold fast to the faith of a spiritual life within, a spiritual world without, just as verily present as if we heard the rustling of angel pinions and the whispering of

*Dr. Andrew Combe.

angel voices every day we lived. We are permitted to behold the phenomena of life from two windows, sensation and reflection; but we all crowd to one window, we are all busy with one world. Yet man, who, in health and in disease, constitutes our problem for study, has a dual nature, two in one, each so intimately associated, so mutually dependent in the present state of existence, that the phenomena of life correlate those of mind. He who shuts out from his judgment the light which mental manifestations throw upon disease, will be often sadly confounded, for the primary evidences of morbid bodily states are oftener spiritual than physical.* The mother knows her child is ill, when, usually bright and cheerful, it becomes dull and peevish; the violent bursts of passion in a gouty subject tell as certainly the invasion of his peculiar disease, as the inflamed and tender joint; the school girl, whose vivacity of manner is lost, who wearies with her studies and fails in her recitations, tells us better than by physical signs of an overworked or illy-fed brain; the fanatic, who sees everything in religion, in morals, in sociology, or in politics, with absolute clearness, and is ready to quarrel with all the world because his views are disregarded, tells us of congested cerebral centres, as certainly as he who "scatters firebrands, arrows and death, exclaiming, "Am I not in sport?" Relieve the cerebral congestion, and you cure the fanaticism—better whistle down the wind than waste argument on such a man. The mercurial disposition, the sudden and uncontrollable bursts of grief or of laughter, mark hysteria more distinctly than any purely physical symptoms. And thus we might wander through a large portion of the catalogue of diseases, and show how often psychological phenomena are among the most important, sometimes the sole manifestations of their presence. That very word Disease, how would you define it? If you are a solidist, your answer is one thing; if a humoralist, another; if a vitalist, still another; if you swear by Broussais, by the Vienna school, by Virchow, still others. But, lying behind all pathologies, deeper than all material phenomena, this word disease declares a *mental*, not a bodily state—it is *dis-ease*, disquiet, want of ease, a state of unrest, discomfort: so, too, malaise, while sympathy and pathology are derived from the same root as pathetic.

Nor should we forget, in estimating the value of philosophical culture, regarding philosophy still in its limited sense as signifying the

*Dr. Thomas Laycock.

science of mind, that we are called upon occasionally to treat persons laboring under insanity, and also to give our evidence before the courts as experts, in cases of alleged mental unsoundness. I do not suppose we are prepared to admit Dr. Samuel Johnson's sweeping judgment in regard to the almost universal prevalence of insanity, in some form; but yet, according to the testimony* of those best qualified in our own profession to judge, a vast deal of latent mental disease exists: it is sad to think, sad to know, we meet men and women, day by day, their true condition unrecognized by the mass, unrecognized by any but the skilled medical observer, who are partially deranged, and who steadily advance to open, acknowledged insanity; yet if these cases are early detected, treatment may arrest the farther progress of disease, may restore them to perfect health. We all admit, theoretically at least, that a thorough knowledge of the mind and its laws, is indispensably necessary for an alienist physician; but we should make the claim wider, it is essential for every physician, ignorance on this subject is as culpable as ignorance of anatomy on the part of the surgeon.

But again: We all know the power which the mind may exercise in pre-disposing to disease—not only so, but in determining its invasion—not merely in functional but also in organic form, for while a Benevolent Creator has placed the springs of organic life beyond the special control of the will, so that the great currents, respiration, circulation and innervation, flow on “or when we wake or when we sleep;” yet they are not too remote to be disturbed or even arrested by mental emotions: many a disease, even of fatal issue, starts in the spiritual, not in the physical being.

Nor can we forget the truth, since daily illustrations present it, how the light of hope is oftentimes the life of the body, how faith may lift up men from sick beds, how despair may help disease to a fatal termination, how a resolute will may quicken and sustain the vital powers in struggling with the most dangerous illness—or weariness of life, weariness from misfortunes, injustice and unkindness, or from sin, may depress physical energies below the point of resistance to disease. At one time we must kindle the hope—again pluck a rooted sorrow from the heart; here excite the faith—there dispel the gloom of despair and rouse the slumbering will, and to the life-weary one prove that truth, and nobleness, and honor, and generous

*Dr. Forbes Winslow.

affections, yea, forbearance and forgiveness, a mantle of charity for all sin, still are to be found, before we can expect to derive any benefit from the exhibition of physical agents.

Some sort of a mental philosophy, whether learned from books or by observation, and evolved from his own consciousness, every successful practitioner must have.

The true physician must combine the two great offices of observation and reflection. His senses furnish him with the raw material, which his higher powers must weave into some sort of fabric. Facts are the mere hieroglyphics upon the tablets of nature—he is the interpreting priest unto whom they are Divine revelations. If a physician's experience through three score years and ten, be crowded with facts, it of itself is nothing—it is nothing; it matters not what he has seen, but the question is, what does he know? what laws has he deduced from this multitude of facts? what generalizations has he made, what principles has he grasped? If none, wherein is he wiser than one of those kind-hearted creatures not wearing bifurcated garments, who has consecrated herself to playing doctor gratuitously and miscellaneously, who can cure croup with lard and molasses, or scarlet fever with tar, drive out the measles with saffron tea, and who always has some infallible remedy for inflammation of the mammary gland, nasty or nice, from earthworms and Kiersted salve up to pancakes? So far as experience enlarges the boundaries of permanent knowledge, it is of infinite value unto all; even if it gives its possessor better therapeutical success, we cheerfully admit its value to him and to those benefitted by his practice. But let us remember what Hippocrates has said, "experience is deceptive;" or Cullen, "in medicine false facts are more numerous than false theories." While it is much easier to observe than to think, and so the great* majority are observers rather than thinkers; yet to observe correctly is no easy matter—the work is often done hastily, imperfectly, not patiently and completely. Now one important corrective of hasty observations, of deceptive experience and false facts, will be found in the thorough discipline of the intellectual powers—the observer will know what he is looking for, what are the essential elements in morbid phenomena, rejecting impertinent, accidental, or apparent facts, retaining those which are pertinent, fixed, and real—in short, reflection will improve observation. And here it may be

*Buckle's History of Civilization in England.

incidentally remarked, the skepticism which we meet with now and then, in our professional literature, manifested, too, not as a general thing, by inferior minds, a skepticism which we have also witnessed occasionally in our State Society, on the part of some of its members, is to be regarded as an omen of good. Because men doubt they inquire; doubt is a portal to knowledge, a gateway to philosophy. Doubts are the sentinels guarding our spiritual life, as pains our physical. No man rests upon a bed of roses when these sentinels disturb him, but up and away with all his soul's energies, up and away through the dark wilderness of skepticism to the promised land of light beyond. Better be glad, then, than grieve that there are medical skeptics in the regular profession—men who question much of our generally received teaching and practice. Though

“There is a consecrating power in time,
And what is gray with years to man is god-like.”

Yet this should not defend hoary errors; human knowledge would progress slowly if Faith were man's only teacher. Let, then, everything we believe and do in medicine, if necessary, be subjected to the most thorough investigation, to crucial experiments; we will know more, whatever is true will abide—gold from the crucible, the diamond in the sun-light—and the sooner the false is swept away the better.

Let us not forget in our strictly philosophic and professional studies, a wider range of literature; let us have a place in our libraries for some of the classic writers of ancient and of modern times. A certain variety of diet best promotes our physical health, and nature bountifully provides it. We need, too, diverse articles of intellectual food, and the world's best minds have produced them in rich abundance. Suitable reading will enlarge the physician's mind, driving out little and low thoughts, liberalizing and making his soul truly catholic, teaching him charity for the frailties and errors of his fellow men, and admiration for their virtues; making him know man better, whatever of evil or of good, whatever of truth and error there may be in all things he believes, in all things that he does; and the liberal soul in all things human, in all faith and practice, will ever find some portion or semblance of truth, some portion or semblance of good, and in no thing human absolute unalloyed truth, absolute unalloyed good: there is none good save One, there is none true save Him who sways the sceptre of the Universe. Courtesy,

grace, and kindness of manner, a refining influence upon the whole nature, nobleness of thought and of feeling—all may flow from taking to our hearts the noble and gentle spirits of the past, and storing in our minds their high thoughts and noble deeds.

We cannot, we ought not to be omniverous in our literary appetite. There are foul birds who feed upon rottenness and corruption, and who pollute the very air with their noisome stench, others reject aught but the cleanest grain; and so we may select whatsoever is pure, whatsoever is of good report.

Sometimes we find valuable information, of a professional character, in general literature. Many of the phenomena of disease and of death have been accurately described by our best novelists; by travellers we are informed of the physical condition of men under different climatic and dietetic influences; from De Quincey and Coleridge we can learn the most important psychological, and many of the physical effects of opium, and from one of our own countrymen those of haschish.

As we ourselves drink more deeply from the wells of literature, we may find it advisable to prescribe from the same or similar sources to some of our patients. Many a mind and body have been ruined by improper reading; many restored by judicious reading. In not a few diseases, if we break up the chain of morbid thoughts, divert the mind to new activities, we have cured our patient; and to accomplish such an end, we ought to be prepared to resort to so pleasant an agency as literature, selecting with equal facility from the shelves of the bookseller as from those of the druggist. A book instead of a bolus, a magazine instead of an emetic, a poem instead of a purge, will often be judicious practice, and a practice for which an intelligent patient will be duly grateful.

Physicians can welcome to their communion and companionship poet as well as philosopher, the man of imagination as well as of reason, without unfitting their minds for the duties due to medical science. Nay, thus they will be better qualified for them. Buckle has well declared that the Imagination no less than Reason was designed to teach us truth. They have suffered unnatural divorce in these latter days—we have laid a ban upon high imaginative power, and, Gradgrind-like, are as greedy for facts as poor *Oliver Twist* was for more bread. But the highest generalizations in science have had all the freshness and vigor of poetic inspirations; they have been made sometimes by great poets, at others by men of at least a

poetic cast of mind, at others by men who felt the divine afflatus of a poetic age. Remember what the great German poet, Goethe, has taught us with regard to plants; see the flash of poetic inspiration in Oken's discovery of one of the fundamental laws of a new anatomical science;—and “the magnificent generalizations of Newton and our own Harvey could never have been completed in an age absorbed in one unvarying round of experiments and observations.” Plato represented man as a charioteer, whose two steeds struggle against each other, one seeking the earth, the other heaven. Let us change the interpretation of these steeds which the old philosopher gave; let them not be earthly passion and heavenly aspiration, but let them be imagination and reason,—and we will urge our successful way to the goal, the high ends medicine proposes, not by the one nor by the other, but by their combined energies in harmonious action.

If there were time, it would not be unprofitable to consider the value of philosophic and literary culture to the individual, contributing so largely to his happiness, and increasing the sphere of his usefulness; but this must be omitted.

Need I enforce the propositions advocated by professional examples and professional precepts? We have given from our profession to philosophy and literature some of their worthiest names. Locke practiced medicine for a time; so did Sir James Mackintosh, and Crabbe also; the gifted Keats, who wished his epitaph to be, “Here lies one whose name was writ in water,” studied medicine; Wolcott, better known as Peter Pindar, was a physician; David Hartley, Akenside, Arbuthnot, Darwin, Mason Good, Abercrombie—all were physicians of greater or less eminence, and all celebrated either in literature or philosophy. Nor let us neglect, in this enumeration, the author of *Religio Medici*, the gifted Sir Thomas Browne, not less remarkable for genius than for various knowledge, an ornament to the age in which he lived and an honor to our profession.

And if you will select the most famous of our profession, from Hippocrates down to Marshall Hall, those who stand up like the sons of Anak among the children of men, you will find, in the majority of cases, they are men of high philosophic, often, too, of large literary attainments: as Tilt has said, if the older physicians were so eminent in the practice of their profession, it is because they were no less versed in philosophy than in physic. That the thinkers rule

the world, is as true in the department of medicine as in almost any other sphere of human activity.

Let us emulate the noble examples of the past; let us revive the old habits of philosophic study and thought. Let us go back, and, I use the words of another, "let us go back to the old manly, intellectual, and literary culture of the days of Sydenham, Arbuthnot, and Gregory, when a physician fed, enlarged, and quickened his entire nature; when he lived in the world of letters as a freeholder, and revered the ancients, while at the same time he pushed on among his fellows, and lived in the present."*

The armor which knights wore a few centuries since, it is said, is too large, too weighty, for the average man of our age. But let it never be said that the intellectual armor which famous physicians wore in a past age, is too large, too massy for our minds.

*Locke and Sydenham. By John Brown, M. D. Edinburgh, 1859.

