Professor Dunglison's Introductory Lecture in Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia, November 4, 1847.

Robley Dunglison, MD

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PROFESSOR DUNGLISON'S
INTRODUCTORY LECTURE
IN
Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia,
November 4, 1847.

PUBLISHED BY THE CLASS.
AN

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE,

DELIVERED TO THE CLASS OF

INSTITUTES OF MEDICINE,

IN

JEFFERSON MEDICAL COLLEGE,

NOVEMBER 4TH, 1847.

BY

ROBLEY DUNGLISON, M.D.

PUBLISHED BY THE CLASS.

PHILADELPHIA:

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1847.
CORRESPONDENCE.

PROF. DUNGLISON.

PHILADELPHIA, NOVEMBER 12TH, 1847.

Sir,—At a meeting of the Students of the Jefferson Medical College, we were appointed a committee to request for publication a copy of your elegant and appropriate Introductory Address, delivered before the class.

Yours respectfully,

F. M. Prince, Ala., President.
A. A. F. Hill, Geo., Secretary.
C. F. Stansbury, D. C.
W. F. Jackson, Me.
J. E. Lotthor, N. H.
F. B. Brewer, M. D., Vt.
E. H. Parker, Mass.
C. C. Halsey, R. I.
S. Birdsell, Conn.
P. H. Hayes, N. Y.
W. I. Moore, N. J.
D. Gierer, Penn.
I. L. Adkins, Del.
A. Hardcastle, Md.
A. J. Wilson, Va.
W. H. Montague, S. C.
W. B. Mears, N. C.
G. R. Ramsay, Geo.

T. B. Vaughan, Ala.
I. N. Harper, Florida.
J. L. Doxey, Miss.
J. J. Gautheaux, La.
L. Taylor, Texas.
R. P. Zimmerman, Mo.
R. R. Hardin, Ark.
W. H. Tharp, Tenn.
E. C. Bainbridge, Ky.
L. Kelis, Ohio.
G. M. Gamble, Ind.
E. C. Ellett, Ill.
C. E. Davidson, Mich.
J. W. Brookbank, Iowa.
A. Johnson, Wis.
J. Dawson, M. D., British Birmah.
D. Birn, Ireland.
E. Arnold, England.

Committee.

109 SOUTH 10TH, NOV. 15, 1847.

Gentlemen,—I most cheerfully comply with the wishes of the Students of the Jefferson Medical College, kindly conveyed to me through you, to furnish them with a copy of my Introductory Lecture for publication,—at the same time regretting that it is not more worthy of the favour they are so good as to bestow upon it.

I am, Gentlemen,

With the greatest regard,

Very truly yours,

ROBLEY DUNGLISON.

To Messrs. Francis M. Prince,
Alonzo F. Hill
C. F. Stansbury,
T. B. Vaughan,
I. L. Adkins, &c., &c.,
Committee of the Students of the J. M. C.
INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

Gentlemen:—When, in the discharge of the duty that had been assigned me by my colleagues, I took leave of those, who, at the termination of the last session, had proved themselves worthy of the highest honors of this Institution,—a band of professional brothers, who were the representatives of the largest medical class—and themselves the largest class of graduates—that had ever issued from this college, or from any similar institution in the country,—it was with mixed feelings of sadness and satisfaction for the then present, and of pleasing anticipations for the future, that I spoke of these halls, previously so replete with emulous activity, as then deserted;—glorying, however, as I did, that the melancholy engendered by their still and void condition was diminished by the consolatory and inspiriting reflection, that in a few months the busy, animated scene, would be renewed; and that from them, as from a centre, intellectual and moral irradiations would continue to proceed, which might excite corresponding activity and usefulness in every part of this wide-spread country.

These few months have passed away; the future—then looked forward to—is now present. Those hopes have all been realized; and I have the satisfaction of greeting the largest class in my department that I have ever addressed on an introductory occasion since I have been a teacher; and of welcoming those who have returned to us in such numbers to complete their course of professional education, and to prove themselves—I trust—as deserving of the crowning honours as their predecessors. And not less cordially do I welcome the unusual number of those who are here for the first time; many of them from sister institutions in most of the States of the Union, who have visited us to enjoy the opportunities, which this extensive city, with her various noble philanthropic institutions, affords for full medical instruction; but the larger number in their novitiate,—having, for the first time, quitted the office of the preceptor to drink from the founts of knowledge in another form, and one which may, at first, be somewhat discouraging to them. It rarely, indeed, happens, that,
from the first, the student feels entirely at ease in his new position. Unaccustomed to listen to instruction conveyed orally in a continuous manner from the mouth of his preceptor, and to the rapid succession of topic after topic embraced in the curriculum of a properly organized medical school, an amount of ability and application appears to him to be required, which he fears he may not command; or he imbibes the impression, that the science is too profound for his powers, and abandons himself to despair. It may be consolatory to him to learn, that in no instance, which has come to my knowledge, has this feeling been of more than brief duration. He gradually acquires the art of listening to, comprehending, and registering the various facts, phenomena and arguments, that are classified and presented to him in the most intelligible and pleasing form by the perspicuous and able teacher; his mind—he feels—becomes daily more and more expanded: he knows that he is accumulating information, which may facilitate his future progress in life, and render him important, and perhaps distinguished, amongst his fellow men; and by the time that the termination of the winter's session approaches, he saddens at the thought, that even for a few months he is to be deprived of those lessons of instruction, which had inspired him at first with so much dread and distrust of his powers, and yet had subsequently demonstrated to him, that those powers were fully adequate to the comprehension of the most abstruse questions, when simplified so as to be brought home to the capacities of all.

In the short period that has elapsed since the termination of the last course of lectures, how many changes have occurred amongst those who had formed part of the immense number that have been deeply interested in this institution! Whilst several have commenced a career of prosperity and honour to themselves, and their Alma Mater, the bright hopes of others have been frustrated; and more than one of those who had attained eminence, and whose voices were listened to with interest, and even enthusiasm—session after session—in these very halls, have been removed from their sphere of usefulness and distinction. Nor can I proceed without a passing tribute to one who had grown gray in the service of his country; and who—year after year—honoured us with his presence here;—as regularly at his post as the youngest member of the class;
and who, as an examiner in the medical board of the navy, and the presiding officer of that board, toiled most energetically to keep his mind stored with that knowledge, which he knew to be so essential for the members of a learned, liberal, and most responsible profession, and to maintain himself on a level with its advanced and advancing condition. Dr. Kearney entered the service of his country as a medical officer of the navy at an early age; and, during a career of nearly forty years, passed with distinction through the various gradations,—serving successively as surgeon's mate, surgeon, member, and president of medical boards, and fleet surgeon of different squadrons; and it was in voluntarily offering to join, and joining the squadron in a most insalubrious climate and season, that he fell a victim to his zeal in the cause of his country. Noble-hearted and generous he is said to have been by those who best knew him; kind and affectionate in his domestic relations; sincere in his friendships, and gentlemanly in his intercourse with others. But it was in the discharge of his professional duties, in hospital or on shipboard, that he was seen to the greatest advantage,—all his time and attention being freely and sympathizingly bestowed for the comfort and restoration of those who fell under his professional care. As a member of this class—for so he regarded and enrolled himself—and as an ardent friend of this Institution, and to the course of education pursued in it, we may be permitted to mingle in the common manifestations of sorrow at his loss.

It has not been unusual for the teacher in any department of science to commence his course by a history of the successive steps of discovery that have been made in it; but there is the obvious objection to this, that subjects have to be mentioned, which cannot—it is to be presumed—be intelligible to the tyro; and hence a preferable plan would be—if history is to form any part of the lessons of instruction—that it should terminate, rather than commence, the course. Were I, for example, to detail to you the successive steps in the recent theory of cell formation, before I had instructed you in the terminology and nature of those cells, I should necessarily be unintelligible; and the same applies to every intricate subject connected with the department assigned to me in this Institution. But although a history of individual and successive
discoveries may not be advisable for a preliminary discourse, no better opportunity occurs for reverting to the past on special topics, comparing it with the present, and endeavouring to infer usefully as regards the future. By such reminiscences we may be enabled to trace the course of improvements, and to throw light upon many practices, which, although frequently the offspring of superstition and credulity, were not without their influence on the progress of the science, and, under some form or other, are in active operation at the present day.

A knowledge of the effects of remedial agents must have been obtained everywhere in the same manner,—in the infancy of the world as in savage and uncultivated nations at the present day. Individual experience furnished remedies; accident, in almost all cases, leading to a knowledge of their powers over the living economy; and analogy suggesting their application to disease. In no other way than by accident could the knowledge, that jalap acts as a cathartic, or that opium is possessed of anodyne virtues, have been obtained. Even now, when we are possessed of all the lights which the collateral sciences have shed upon that of medicine, our experience with a new article of the materia medica must be wholly tentative; but as soon as we acquire an acquaintance with its effects on the organism, our physiological and pathological knowledge enables us to apply it rationally, with full advantage, to the treatment of disease. Until, however, the properties of any new drug are known, great caution is necessary in making use of it. Camerarius first, and De Candolle afterwards, showed,—what is now notorious—that there is considerable analogy in the action on the organism of vegetables, which resemble each other in their external characters or botanical relations; and hence, that the arrangement of plants into natural groups or families is calculated to aid us in estimating the alimentary or medicinal properties of untried vegetables,—a method of investigation most useful to those who are shipwrecked on foreign and unknown shores, and whose subsistence may have to be derived from the vegetable products; and one also of great value to the scientific naturalist in his appreciation of the various new plants which he may have occasion to examine, as respects their utility in rural economy or in medicine. Yet this rule of guidance must not be considered absolute.
The gramineae have farinaceous and nutritive seeds; the labiatae are stomachic and cordial; the seeds of the umbelliferae are tonic and stimulant; those of the euphorbiaceae acrid and purgative; the juice of the coniferae is resinous; and the bark of the amentaceae astringent and febrifuge. Such is the general fact; but there are some striking exceptions:—the deadly conium, for example, is alongside the nutritive and innoxious carrot; the sweet potato touches the acrid jalap; the bitter colocynth may be mistaken, by the eye, for the melon; the potato is amongst the poisonous solaneae; the lolium temulentum, of deleterious agency, amongst the cerealia; and the fatal cherry-laurel is in close relationship with the plums and the cherries.

In the infancy of our art, the number of remedial agents whose virtues were learned by experience must necessarily have been few; yet we have no record of a period when such agents were not known. Experience of particular articles was derived from accidental injuries; and, in the origin of the art, surgery was doubtless greatly in advance of medicine. Sympathy for suffering incited to exertion, with the view of discovering some method of relief; and where sensible agencies failed, recourse was had to charms, incantations and amulets, suggested by ignorance and superstition amongst the rude and barbarous nations of the present day, almost as extensively, and confided in as implicitly, as in the cradle of mankind. If the patient died, the event was ascribed to the will of the gods; if he recovered,—often by virtue of those instinctive powers which are seated in every organized body—animal and vegetable—and without which the efforts of the physician would be vain,—a case of cure was recorded; but no inquiry was made as to the precise agency exerted. To the charm, the incantation, the amulet, was ascribed the whole result; and tradition handed down the knowledge of its presumed efficacy, and led to its employment in similar cases. Would that we were much more philosophical even in the nineteenth century; for we meet with many like cases, that exhibit but a slight remove from these conditions of ignorance and barbarism, even in people that would start at the idea of being assimilated to the benighted of those remote ages, or the scarcely less elevated members of a barbarous community of the present day!

For a long period of history, even amongst the most enlight-
ened nations, there could have been only empirical medicine acquired in this manner; and all medical instruction must have consisted in a transmission, by tradition, of the knowledge of mechanical means, and the properties of remedies, previously employed—as it was conceived with success—for the healing of wounds and other injuries, and for the removal of disease. Art—rude art—existed; phenomena were observed; but no one attempted to fathom the laws of phenomena, and science was therefore not even generated. Herodotus informs us, that the Babylonians, Chaldeans and other nations of antiquity, had no physicians. When any one was attacked with disease, he was carried into the public thoroughfares, and the passers-by were interrogated whether they had suffered under, or witnessed, a similar affection, and if so, they were required to state their experience, and to recommend such measures as might seem to them adapted for the removal of the malady.

The first individuals, who raised themselves above the vulgar, made the treatment of disease an object of study, and obtained success by practising it, were elevated to the rank of gods. Altars were erected to them; and the priests, from being the oracles of the god whom the people desired to consult, became themselves physicians. Hence, the practice of medicine was, for a long period, a part of priestcraft, and was taught by the ministers of the altars with many occult and mysterious ceremonies, well calculated to impress the vulgar, and to excite a belief in their miraculous powers.

Such was the history of Asclepios or Æsculapius, and the Asclepiades; and if we advert to the mode in which medicine was practised in the temples erected to him, we can readily comprehend the agencies which were concerned in the relief that was so often experienced. In the first place, it was the universal belief, that all diseases were emanations from the anger of the gods. The gods alone could, consequently, cure them; and it was in those sacred places, that Æsculapius manifested the evidences of his extraordinary powers. The ceremonies, used to propitiate heaven in favour of the sick, varied at different periods. They were almost all, however, of a nature to act on the imagination, whilst a strict regimen was rigorously inculcated. The entrance to the temple was interdicted to all who had not previously undergone purification,—the processes connected with which necessarily tended to
excite hope in the future, and to inspire the sick with full
confidence in the revelations about to be made to them. When
permitted to appear before the idol and present their offerings,
they found him surrounded by so many mysterious symbols,
and witnessed the performance of so many imposing ceremonies,
that their exalted imaginations made them regard as infallible
every oracle of the god. Most of the temples, too, were
situated in very salubrious places; and within, or around them,
mineral and often thermal waters flowed. It is, therefore, easy
to conceive, that the purity of the atmosphere, the change of
society and scenery experienced by the invalids during their
pilgrimage to consult the oracle, may have had a powerful
influence on all those affections that we know to be benefited by
similar resources. The preliminary ceremonies to which they
were subjected, and the sacrifices which were required of them,
contributed still more to the same end. In the first instance,
the most rigorous abstinence was enjoined. Before they
could approach the cave of Charonium they were compelled to
fast several days. At Oropus, in Attica, before consulting the
oracle of Amphiarraus, they were to abstain from wine for
three days, and from every kind of nourishment for twenty-four
hours. In leading them through all the avenues of the temple,
the priests detailed to them minutely, and mystically, the
varied miracles which the god had performed on their prede­
cessors, whose votive offerings and inscriptions they had pre­
served; and dwelt especially on those cases that resembled
theirs.

After these promenades, carefully adapted, in regard to ex­
tent, to the powers of the invalid, sacrifices were offered to the
divinity with fervent prayers to obtain from him the revela­
tion, which was not communicated, however, until the patient
had been bathed, rubbed, and subjected to various manipula­
tions well calculated to excite a new action in the nervous
system, and, through it, in the whole system of nutrition.
They were subjected, too, to fumigations before hearing the an­
swers of the oracle; went through a process of preparation by
prayer; slept in the neighbourhood of the temple on the skin of
a ram, which had been offered up as a sacrifice, or by the side of
the statue of the god,—expecting, as they were taught to believe,
the appearance before them of the God of Health. Can we be
surprised, that under such circumstances the excited imagina­
tions of the nervous more especially might lead them to fancy, and to credit, that the revelation of future events was actually made to them, or that, in their dreams, they might believe that they saw Æsculapius present himself before them, and instruct them as to the means to be employed for their cure!

The remedies advised in their dreams or revealed to them by the priests, who were always the interpreters of the dreams, were usually of a kind calculated to do neither harm nor good,—such, for example, as gentle cathartics prepared of stewed currants, diet easy of digestion, or fasting and bathing, accompanied by various mystic ceremonies. Yet occasionally they were of a more violent character. Aristides—we are told—was the dupe and victim of the Asclepiades for ten successive years. He was alternatively purged, vomited and blistered; made to walk barefoot under a burning sun in summer, and in winter doomed to seek for the return of health by bathing his feeble and emaciated body in the river. All this severity of treatment, he was made to believe, was exercised towards him by the express directions of Æsculapius himself, with whom he was persuaded to fancy that he held converse in his dreams, and frequently beheld in nocturnal visions. On one occasion, the god, fatigued by the importunities of Aristides, ordered him to lose one hundred and twenty pounds of blood, which he very judiciously took the liberty of declining!

After his recovery the patient rendered thanks to the god, and carried him offerings; and, not unfrequently, the parts that had been the seat of the affection were modeled in ivory, gold, silver or other metal,—a species of votive offering, which was termed anathema, and numbers of which were preserved in the temples. Of one of these votive tablets, discovered in the isle of the Tiber, and published by Gruter, the following is a translation:—

"A blind soldier, named Valerius Aper, having consulted the oracle, received for answer, that he ought to mix the blood of a white cock with honey, and make an ointment to rub the eyes with for three days. He recovered his sight, and returned thanks to the god in the presence of the people."

The exclusive exercise of medicine was confirmed to the priests by other regulations. As soon as a valuable remedy or preparation was discovered, its composition and mode of preparation were inscribed on the gates and columns of the temple,
The inventors of surgical instruments also deposited a specimen; and we can thus understand, that useful isolated facts might be collected by competent individuals into a consistent whole; and there is great reason for the belief, that the father of physic was largely indebted to the votive tablets, preserved in the temple at Cos, in the preparation of his immortal works.

The custom of hanging up votive tablets in the temple of the patron saint, after escape from danger of various kinds, has been known in all ages; and still prevails in certain parts of the world. According to Scandinavian mythology, the supreme god, Odin or Woden—whence our Wednesday, Woden's day—assumes the name of Nicker, when he acts as the destructive or evil principle; hence, perhaps, our term Old Nick, as applied to the evil one. In this character he inhabits the lakes and rivers of Scandinavia, where he raises sudden storms and tempests, and leads men into destruction. In short, he is the northern Neptune, or some subordinate sea-god of noxious disposition. Nicker, with the Scandinavians, being an object of dread, propitiatory worship was offered him; and hence it has been imagined, that the Scandinavian Nicker became, in the middle ages, St. Nicholas, the patron of sailors, whose aid is still invoked in storms and tempests,—a supposition which receives countenance from the devotion still felt by the Gothic nations towards St. Nicholas. To this saint many churches on the sea shores are dedicated, and many a prayer to St. Nicholas is still offered up by the seamen passing by. To these churches, in many countries, sailors, who have suffered shipwreck, resort to return thanks for their preservation, and to hang up votive tablets representing the dangers they have escaped, in gratitude to the saint for the protection he vouchsafed them, and in the fulfilment of vows, made in the height of the storm. This custom, which is more especially in use in catholic countries, is probably taken immediately from the ancient Romans, who had it among a number of superstitions from the Greeks; for we are told, that Bion, the philosopher, was shown several of those votive pictures hung up in a temple of Neptune near the sea-side; and the custom is referred to by Horace.

Such was the condition of medical observation in the then enlightened Greece;—confined to the priesthood, and full of mys-
tery to the uninitiated, but leading to a knowledge of numerous remedial agencies; for there is every reason to believe, that in the earliest periods the ancients had a knowledge of several of our most active remedies,—hellebore, opium, and squill for example. Blood letting, too—as we have seen—was employed amongst them. We are told,—and it is the earliest record we have of the operation,—that Pcodalirius—one of the sons of Aesulapius—on his return from Troy, was cast ashore on the Isle of Scyros, where he landed, however, in safety; and was taken by a shepherd to the court of King Damocles. Here, he gave proofs of his medical skill, by curing the daughter of Damocles—Syrna—of the effects of a fall, by bleeding her in both arms, after her life had been despaired of. In those remote periods—as is too much the case even at present—extensive virtues were assigned to agencies, often of the most inert kind, which frequently obtained the credit of cures, that had been effected by the jugglery of the pagan priests, but partly also by the excellent hygienic rules to which the patient was subjected. At one time, almost the whole of the materia medica consisted of the machinery of magic. Absurd and unmeaning words scrawled on parchment; figures of idols suspended round the neck, were considered to be capable of curing ague; hemorrhage was arrested by charms, and even luxations were said to have been reduced by barbarous expressions and magical songs; and we can understand that Cato, the censor, may—as was affirmed—have succeeded in this manner; or, in other words, by distracting the attention of the patient by those ceremonies, and seizing his opportunities for such manipulations as might be needed, he may have effected the reduction of a luxated limb. To imagine, however, that he appreciated the modus operandi of such ceremonies, would be to suppose that he far exceeded in intelligence his contemporaries and successors for ages. Even now,—when education has been so extensively diffused—faith is still placed in the protecting power of the amulet; and constantly in my attendance on an extensive eleemosynary institution, when it was found important to employ physical diagnosis in chest diseases, I noticed the protecting amulet worn close to the heart, and as profoundly cherished, and as much faith reposed in its prophylactic virtues, as in the classic periods to which I have referred. Nay, it is not long since there might be seen adver-
tised in an English newspaper—for the sum of thirty-five dollars, I believe—a caul, to be worn by one going to sea, to protect him from shipwreck; this caul being the fetal membranes, where the child had been born with them unbroken, dried, and worn by the mariner,—it being supposed, I presume, that if the child survived in the midst of the waters, the membranes might likewise prevent the mariner who wore them from being drowned!

It need scarcely be said, that whatever curative influence was exerted by the ceremonies in the temples of old must have been through the moral on the physique; by the new impressions made on the nervous system, and on the imagination through the senses, thus indirectly modifying the whole system of nutrition. The wonderful cures that resulted from the efforts of Prince Hohenlohe, in our own time, were doubtless produced in this manner; and the same agency is exerted in various ways amongst the people. It is stated—recorded—that a poor woman, who had attended several confirmations, was at length recognized by the bishop. Pray, have I not seen you here before? said he. "Yes," replied the woman, "I get me confirmed as often as I can: they tell me it is good for the rheumatiz." Even in those distant periods, however, we have seen, that judicious advice, in regard to diet and regimen, was given, which could not fail to produce salutary results. Such appears to have been the case with the sympathetic powders that were employed in the treatment of wounds. Whilst the powder was applied to the instrument that had inflicted the wound, the wound itself was carefully bound up, and left to those instinctive actions, to which I before alluded, and which are always capable of repairing injuries when those injuries are within certain limits. Such, also, was the case with the Royal Touch, so extensivelly employed at one time for the cure of scrofula—the King's evil—by the sovereigns of England and France, whose peculiar attribute it has been claimed to be; but history does not sanction this—as might, indeed, be expected—for it appears to have been not unfrequently employed in Scandinavia, and to have been derived from the mystical practices of the Druids in curing disease. In France, the practice was continued, on the occasions of solemn ceremonials, up to the reign of Louis the fifteenth; and it is stated, by an historian of the period, that on Easter Sunday,
in the year 1686, sixteen hundred person were touched by Louis the fourteenth.—the words used by the King being "Le Roy te touche, Dieu te guérisse,"—"The King touches thee: may God cure thee." In the reign of Louis the fourteenth, it fell into disuse; but was revived so recently as the time of Charles the 10th, deposed in 1830, who touched at his coronation. In England, the origin of the touch is ascribed to Edward the Confessor, who ascended the throne in 1041. But the belief in its efficacy appears to have been greatest in the reign of Charles the second. After the Restoration, the numbers that flocked to Whitehall and Windsor almost exceed belief. An exact register was kept of those who were admitted; and in twelve years,—it appears—ninety-two thousand one hundred and seven persons were touched; and in one day—in June, 1660,—six hundred! With the reign of Charles, however, the faith and confidence in the efficacy of the Royal Touch subsided. It is recorded, that, at the suggestion of Sir John Floyer, a distinguished physician of the day, then residing at Lichfield, the mother of Dr. Samuel Johnson carried him to London to be touched by Queen Anne, but without effect. On the same day, March 30th, 1714, two hundred persons were touched; and this would seem to have been the last occasion on which the touch was publicly practised in England; as, upon the accession of the House of Brunswick, the degrading mummery was discontinued.

And can we doubt for a moment, that the main agency, in these cases, was through the nervous system, in the manner I have mentioned. After the restoration of Charles II., the whole kingdom was in a state of high mental excitement; and for a time never was monarch more over-estimated. All this would, of necessity, render his touch more effective; and, accordingly, a larger proportion was considered to have been cured by him than by any other monarch. The idea, too, was maintained, that the gift could only be advantageously exercised by one who was a king by Divine right; and we can, therefore, comprehend, during the existence of such a belief, that Cromwell may have failed, and that his royal successor might have been more fortunate. We are told, indeed, that Cromwell tried in vain to exercise this royal prerogative, "he"—says a loyal writer of the day—"having no more right to the healing power than he had to the royal jurisdiction;" and the key to the solution of
the mystery is suggested by the remark, that after the Restora-
tion none ever failed of receiving benefit, "unless their little
faith and incredulity starved their merits."

That there was positive efficacy in this Royal Touch in
scrofula there can be no doubt. Old Wiseman—one of the
fathers of surgery in England, and whose name is inseparably
associated with its history—declares, in his Treatise on
Scrofula, "that his Majesty"—meaning Charles the Second,—
"cureth more in any one year than all the chirurgeons of Lon-
don have done in an age;" and he affirms,—"I myself have
been a frequent eye-witness of many hundreds of cures per-
formed by his Majesty's touch alone, without any assistance of
chirurgery, and those, many of them, such as had tired out the
endeavours of able chirurgeons before they came thither." Yet
no one at the present day 'would believe, for a moment, that
any special virtue existed in the touch of royalty; for precisely
the same results followed the touch and the invocations of Va-
lename Greatrakes in the 17th century, of whom the Royal
Society of London expressed the incomprehensible opinion,
that his success depended upon a "sanative contagion in his
body."

The same may be said of the efforts of Perkins at the com-
mencement of the present century, whose metallic tractors
were estimated by the Perkinistic Committee of London to
have cured, up to the date of their report, one million five
hundred thousand cases. Yet that the effect of the tractors
was exerted wholly through the imagination was demon-
strated by the fact, that when Dr. Haygarth formed pieces of
wood into the shape of the tractors, and with much assumed
pomp and ceremony applied them to a number of sick persons,
who had been previously prepared to expect something extra-
ordinary, the results were found to be almost miraculous: "so
that,"—says an historian of the period—Dr. Bostock—"except
the renewal of lost parts, or the change of mechanical struc-
ture, nothing seemed beyond their power to accomplish."

The seventh son of a seventh son is presumed to possess
miraculous healing powers; and Mr. Phillips, in his excellent
Treatise on Scrofula, states, that there is still, or was lately,
in Devonshire, a farmer who is a ninth son of a ninth son, and
supposed, in consequence of his birthright, to be endowed with
extraordinary powers of healing: he strikes for the evil, one
day every week; "and an intelligent surgeon informs me;"—says Mr. Phillips—"that some of his cures in scrofulous cases, 'are really astonishing.' His fame is high in his district, and he takes care to preserve his credit by not undertaking the cure of all cases."

Yet if the Royal Touch be abandoned, notwithstanding the undoubted testimony that has been brought forward of its efficacy, it becomes the physician and philanthropist not to suffer it to pass wholly away, without an endeavour to appreciate the mode in which that good was effected; and to avail himself of it when circumstances may arise to suggest its employment. In this way, valuable hints may be derived from practices often apparently—and, in their details, really—irrational; and principles may be established from a mass of isolated details seemingly chaotic. Even homeopathy, with all its absurdities, enables us to deduce rational and important inferences. Which of us could credit that if we take a grain of flint or charcoal, mix it with as much sugar as could be contained in the hold of a line of battle ship, and give a grain of this, that it could exhibit any ‘potency,’ and à fortiori that smelling at this infinitesimal quantity of a powerless agent could possess any curative property? Yet the homeopathist professes to believe this; and the dose is even large for him. But if we reflect, that diet is carefully attended to; and that an air of mystery is thrown around the new light, whilst the instinctive actions are not interfered with by powerfully disturbing influences, we can as readily understand, that a large mass of chronic diseases may yield to it,—especially when occurring in those of nervous and excitable temperaments, and whose faith and confidence are freely given to novel agencies, particularly when shrouded in mystery, as that the same class of affections should have yielded to the ceremonies in the ancient temples. The investigation of this subject has indeed led a distinguished, bold and independent searcher after truth, and an elevated member of the profession, to deductions strikingly analogous to those which I have for many years promulgated from this place on occasions similar to the present. Animadverting, in forcible language, on the absurdity of the doctrine which teaches that the decillionth of a grain of charcoal or oystershell is capable of producing hundreds of the most formidable symptoms, and of curing, as by magic, the
most inveterate diseases, whilst we can take ounces, nay pounds, of the very same substance into our stomachs with no other inconvenience than its mechanical bulk,—and stating, that this "seems so gratuitous an outrage to human reason, that the mind instinctively recoils from the proposition,"—he philosophically inquires into the alleged cures by the homœopaths, and arrives at the just conclusion, "that the curative powers of nature suffice to explain all the triumphs of homœopathy; when we take into consideration other agencies which are at the same time brought to bear;—as the much stricter regulation of the diet and regimen, including the entire omission of vinous and other stimulants; the influence of the imagination, stimulated by previous belief in the potency of the remedies prescribed, and nourished by fervent faith, hope, &c., and by the indirect influence of this faith, hope, &c., in inducing patience, so that time is allowed for nature to work the cure in her own way." Homœopathy has certainly tended to impress upon us still more strongly the well known, but too often overlooked, truth, that all diseases do not require the employment of energetic disturbing agents; and that many of them will proceed more satisfactorily towards health under judicious hygienic cares without the assistance of any medicine. Rational therapeutics has, therefore, benefitted by homœopathy, notwithstanding the follies of the doctrine, whilst it may be admitted, that in special cases evil has resulted from the exclusion of greater energy of treatment.

And can we deny, that the medical philosopher and philanthropist may be even more benefitted by contemplating the treatment of the hydropathist, which is the more simple in one respect, that drugs are wholly discarded? Of the use of cold water externally and internally, the therapeutist of all ages has availed himself, and been impressed with its important agency in a variety of morbid cases; but a systematic application of cold water in a distinct establishment, with an enforced diet and regimen, is the offspring of modern times only. In a letter to the Revd. Mr. Cole, dated in 1775, Horace Walpole says: "Dr. Heberden, as every physician, to make himself talked of, will set up some new hypothesis, pretends, that a damp house, and even damp sheets, which have ever been reckoned fatal, are wholesome: to prove his faith, he
went into his new house totally unaired, and survived it.' And he adds: "At Malvern,"—the seat, by the way, of an extensive hydropathic establishment at the present day, conducted by Dr. Gully, a regularly educated member of the profession—"they certainly put patients into sheets just dipped in the spring."

And there can be no doubt, that many striking cases of recovery follow the use of the Wassercur; that many—most—of them are of the kind which are so signally benefitted by a visit to watering places; and that much is doubtless owing to regulated diet and exercise, as well as to the powerful revulsive agency of the cold water, especially when applied so as to induce sweating. When we take into consideration the entire change that must be produced on patients by a journey to a rural and mountainous hydropathic establishment; and, in the case of the better classes more especially, in their mode of life when they get there, we need not be surprised, that all those chronic affections especially, that are capable of being removed by such revellents, should yield to the efforts of the hydropathist. The application of the wet sheet; the rubbing down with the same; the use of the sweating blanket,—the patient being packed up in a blanket, feather bed and counterpane, until he sweats; the different forms of baths and wet bandages; the drinking of eight to twelve glasses of water daily, each glass holding nearly three quarters of a pint; the coarse, hard fare, and the regulated and sustained exercise, are well calculated to induce a new action in the functions, and to afford relief in a multitude of chronic cases.

It matters not that these and other methods to which I have adverted may have originated in and been sustained by empiricism, and extended for the vilest and most mercenary purposes, the good which philosophy can select from them should be carefully separated, and unhesitatingly embraced.

Valuable preparations have been introduced into the list of medicinal and authorized agents—into our own Pharmacopoeia—which were originally nostrums, or secret remedies. The Mistura Ferri composita is the old antieptic mixture of Griffith. The Confectio Piperis Nigri of the British Pharmacopoeias—properly omitted in that of the United States—is intended as a substitute for Ward's paste, which had, and still has, reputation abroad as a remedy for piles and ulcers of
the rectum. The *Vinum Colchici* is a substitute for the celebrated French gout remedy—the *Eau Médicinale d’Husson*; and the *Pulvis antimonialis* is the officinal representative of the well-known empirical *James’s Powder*. There are not many preparations, however, which have so degraded an origin; for it has been generally found, that as soon as the composition of a nostrum has been divulged, and mystery, and the faith corresponding to such mystery, have passed away in consequence, the preparation has sunk into insignificance, and been speedily forgotten. A Mrs. Joanna Stephens possessed a nostrum for the cure of stone, which was so celebrated, that she offered it to the British Parliament; and it was purchased for the enormous price of twenty-five thousand dollars. It consisted of lime, prepared by calcining the shells of eggs and snails, made into pills with soap. A decoction was also administered, consisting of chamomile, fennel, parsley, and burdock, with a portion of Alicant soap. Its virtues were dependent upon the lime and the tonic properties of the decoction. Hales, Hartley, Kirkpatrick, Lobb, and other eminent physicians, wrote in favour of the nostrum. Yet it is now known only as a matter of history. No one prescribes it; and although it furnishes a useful lesson, no one heeds it.

It is a proper sentiment with the profession, that no secret remedy should be employed by them; and the recent Medical Convention has declared it to be, in their opinion, derogatory to professional character for a physician to hold a patent for any surgical instrument or medicine, or to dispense a secret nostrum, whether it be the composition or exclusive property of himself or others; and that it is reprehensible for physicians to give certificates attesting the efficacy of patent or secret medicines, or in any way to promote the use of them.

Such a declaration is correct and proper; but it should be held to apply to all cases,—not simply to such notorious examples as the Balm of Gilead of Solomon—if still in existence—or the panacea of Swaim. There are elevated members of the profession, however, who would not hesitate to prescribe certain preparations, of the composition of which they are ignorant, although they would spurn the idea of sanctioning the dissemination of those well-known emanations of gross empiricism; yet the violation of the rule is obviously as reprehensible in the one case as in the other, and should be discountenanced by every high-toned and honourable physician.
It may be inferred, then, that from every passing sect or system; from every curative observance, rational or empirical, the judicious therapeutist may extract something that may tend to the advancement of the science, and the extension of his sphere of usefulness; and that it is the duty—as it ought to be the pleasure—of the philanthropic physician to adopt every improvement, no matter from what source it may emanate. To attempt, by the active opposition of the profession, to arrest quackery, even of the most contemptible kind, in its career, would be futile:—nay, more, the opposition is apt to be regarded by the laity as persecution, and persecution suggested by interested and sordid considerations. The human mind, moreover, is so constituted, that it loves mystery; and reposes more faith in that which is hidden—if unblushingly proclaimed—than in the most open and candid exhibition of really potent agents. All that is left, therefore, is for the profession, in every case, to wait until the mystery has been removed, and then to endeavour to appreciate and embrace the good that may flow from it.

Such is the view which reason and philanthropy would compel us to adopt; and if there be any thing perhaps that distinguishes the present condition of the medical mind from the past, it is the disposition of the wisest members of the profession to admit those principles more as rules of action than they did formerly. It is easier, however, to observe than to think; and hence the number of most useful, but not necessarily scientific, pioneers of science, who restrict their attention to contemplating and classifying morbid specimens as they would objects of natural history; without reflecting, whether, or in what manner, they may lead to the saving of life or the alleviation of suffering;—without seeming to give a thought, indeed, to those all-important results. With many of such individuals the disposition has been to narrow down the science of medicine to the mere observation of facts:—to carry it back to those periods when the ancient empirics "saw without discerning, administered without discriminating, and concluded without reasoning,"—a disposition which has been fostered by a recent writer of our own country in an able essay on what he terms the "Philosophy of Medical Science," who—after deprecating in place of lauding, as he ought to do—"the almost universal mania"—to use his own language—
"which exists for explanations and interpretations of all phenomena and their relationships"—remarks:

"The dominant feeling in the American medical mind, seems to be,—not what are the facts and their relationships—
to what extent, and with what degree of positiveness and accuracy, have they been ascertained?—but why are these facts and relationships such as is alleged? And how are they so? A vastly greater degree of importance is often attached to the possible, though, perhaps, wholly unattainable why, and how, and wherefore of the phenomena, than to the phenomena themselves; and in strict conformity to the requisitions of this strange philosophy, in many cases, unless some plausible or satisfactory answer can be given to these questions, the very existence of the phenomena themselves is coolly and complacently denied! We have practically reversed one of the sayings of John Hunter—'Don't think, but try'—and adopted its opposite—'Don't try, but think.'"

Yet John Hunter—possessed of the very highest qualifications as an investigator of nature—"unwearied"—as he has been described—"in induction, sagacious in grouping together analogous phenomena, and ever striving to ascend from propositions of less to those of greater generality," could scarcely have given utterance to so unphilosophical a sentiment. To try without thinking would be the veriest empiricism. It could, at best, lead to an additional accumulation of the so-called facts—some true, others false—which have been piled upon each other in glorious confusion for ages, and have ever weighed on the science;—from which we are daily, indeed, endeavouring to free ourselves. The mere observer of phenomena, who thinks not, is but the unenviable counterpart of him, who

"Saw with his own eyes the moon was round,
Was also certain that the earth was square;
Because he had journey'd fifty miles, and found
No sign that it was circular anywhere."

The true philosopher, who wishes to interrogate nature on any branch of science, must, first of all, reflect or form his hypothesis;—think, in other words, and then try. If he finds the results indicate that the phenomena do not accord with the hypothesis, and that it is insufficient, he abandons it, and has recourse to another—equally suggested by thinking—until ultimately he succeeds in adding one more step to the ladder of science.
Thought suggests the experiment; experiment leads to observation, and thought again fixes the relationship. No number of facts or phenomena can constitute a science. The science—as before remarked—does not exist until we have systematized and deduced the laws of such phenomena. The maxim ascribed to Hunter ought, therefore, to be in reality reversed; and the one substituted for it should be:—“Think and try.” To enable you to do this satisfactorily will be the lofty object which I shall have in view throughout the course that is now opening before us. It will be my endeavour to sift for you the true from the false; the hypothetical assumption from the demonstrated law; to render you familiar with the phenomena of the science—the results of observation—but, still more, to familiarize you with the investigation of the laws of these phenomena; to furnish you—in other words—with materials for thinking, and to render the process more easy to you.

Enter along with me, then, on the paths which we have to tread together for the next few months, cheerily and energetically. Although your guide and counsellor, I glory in being esteemed, at the same time, as your fellow labourer in pursuits which have so often been full of instructive pleasure to me; and which it will be my ambition to render as agreeable and edifying to you; and let me counsel you to look upon every one who is engaged in the same noble enterprise, and directing his course honourably towards the same great goal—the Trojan or the Tyrian—the members of the various respectable institutions for medical instruction—here and elsewhere—as belonging to the same great brotherhood, and deserving, therefore, of your sympathy and support, assuredly not of unkindly sentiments or ungenerous rivalry. Possessed of such liberal—cosmopolitan—feelings, nothing can distract your attention from the expositions which I shall industriously make to you; and I may venture to promise, that you will find the study of biology—of the phenomena and laws of life—“charming,” as a great epic poet has said of “divine philosophy;” and, like it,—

“Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose;
But musical as is Apollo’s lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectar’d sweets;
Where no crude surfeit reigns.”

Dec. 25, 1847.