

THOUGHTS
ON THE
PRESENT CHARACTER AND CONSTITUTION
OF THE
MEDICAL PROFESSION.

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CAMBRIDGE:

Printed by J. Smith, Printer to the University;

AND SOLD BY G. & W. B. WHITTAKER, AVE-MARIA-LANE, LONDON;
AND DEIGHTON & SONS, AND NICHOLSON, CAMBRIDGE.

1823



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PREFACE.

ALTHOUGH "the knowledge of a disease is half its cure," yet it is often a most hopeless task to find out the remaining half. This perhaps may be held as well a moral as a medical axiom. Indeed under the former head not only is it often an impotent but an invidious undertaking, and one in which the "cui bono" lies too deep and too doubtful. There are certain classes of our institutions, in the constitution of which, when arrived at certain stages of corruption, any attempt at correcting abuses, or even pointing them out, has been thought an effort

left only for the disaffected or the desperate. There are, as if to fit these, certain classes of people, and generally the worthiest, to whom (even in this age of bold thinking) habit is a law and reformation a chimera. They consider these old institutions somewhat like old china jars on a chimney-piece, beautiful to look at though in dust and cobwebs, but not to be handled or cleaned. They conceive and often justly, that when matters get to an extraordinary rise above the common tide-mark, they will by the natural operation of time, the great leveller, come to their level at last. Governed and guided, less by the force of habit than the force of indolence or true “vis inertiae” they never think of new tracks or quicksands, but move on in the old path of precedent, looking neither to the right nor left, or stand still.

It is in the constitution of the learned professions that these respectable apathists and antiquarians have principally manifested their feelings, and when we look at the elements of that of Medicine, we easily see it has come in for its full share. Indeed it would seem here, more particularly of late, that in proportion as abuses have increased, attempts at purification have diminished; that finally they have been discarded as a worthless task, and their fate consigned to ridicule or oblivion. In vain do we live in an age of new light, in vain do reform and change seem the watchwords around us; our constitution stands still, our corporation seems inviolable. The science has marched in the spirit of this age, so has the *profession*, but how? irregularly and inversely of each other: the one has been as much elevated as the other has been

degraded ; the one has been every day strengthened by fresh facts, whilst the other has been every day debased by fresh frauds and follies ; zeal for its true interests has declined, professors have fallen from their eminence, and their credit and confidence is diminished. To him who opens his eyes on the present map of society this must be obvious ; but by him who looks at the medical map, how much stronger must it be perceived and how much more must it be regretted ? Never has our art made such strides towards perfection, never has our science been so surrounded with light, never was public confidence in either so divided. The field has been fine and fair, cultivation has produced new fruits and flowers, but the soil becomes rank and weeds have crowded around. He must be bold who denies that such is the present state of things,

he must be blind who does not perceive that we have arrived at a new medical era. In this era as in a circle the brightest and darkest sides are close to each other; and were the science less dependent and less feeble in its nature, we might feel more secure in its modern basis, and have less fears as to our future reputation.

Any inquiry into the causes and character of this new era must interest those who have any feeling for either the science or its professors. Plain simple statements are often the soundest expositors of abuse, and the firmest steps towards reform; and although the public palate is too often vitiated now-a-days to relish such simples, yet the taste of truth like the taste of some other bitters is too wholesome not to prevail at last. The work of reform must be the work of

time, but not of time only, we must do our own part; it is the duty not alone of common philanthropy but almost of common honesty to join in it; the efforts at purification must be sincere and simultaneous, and divisions and distrusts must be laid aside. Then, but not till then, can the legislature strengthen the ranks of the profession; then, but not till then, can public confidence be restored. The public seldom think on these matters, unless in times of notorious change; they are led and willing to be led in general; and although their lives and interests are materially concerned, yet it is the profession, at least the worthy portion of it, that are the principal sufferers.

It would be vain and idle to hope much from the following little hurried sketch. It is a faint and feeble outline

and none can be more aware of its incompetencies than its Author. To fill up and extend this outline, to catch every new sign of the Medical times, every new feature that plays on their moving aspect, all this I leave to other physiognomists and other painters. If it points out the leading *genera* of abuses, the *species* will be indicated of themselves. If it at all disturbs the torpor that at present seems to exist on the subject, by placing it in a point of view more easily understood, I shall be much more than satisfied; and though like the pebble in the lake its voice may be faint and its bubble soon die, I shall forget its feebleness and be glad I have thrown it in. Its faults however I cannot forget, I know they exist, and I must beg indulgence. I have but two common pleas, first the *nature*, and secondly the *necessity* of the

subject; as to the former, it is needless to observe that when so wide a field is embraced in so small a compass, the lines must be often loose, and the arrangement and connection must suffer: as to the latter, I must say that it has so forcibly impressed me, that in wishing to give back this force, in *expressing this impression*, I fear I have been guilty of *repetitions* and *tautologies*, and thus weakened the original strength of the materials.

For the rest, whatever be its fate, I can only plead its humble devotion to the good cause: all will perhaps agree in the existence of the disease, though a few may differ as to the modes of treatment: all will agree in its general interest. It is not alone the concern of the science or the profession, but the

common concern of humanity : every well-wisher to either must mingle in this interest, and although a most respectable delicacy may still restrain him from the ranks of reform, yet he may rejoice at least to learn that there are others who can share in his regret.

April 2, 1822.

THOUGHTS,

&c.



To deny that the fabric of Society in England has undergone the most remarkable change in the last twenty years, and that its materials have been considerably deranged and dislocated, might perhaps be a bold undertaking. To deny also that the change in our national character and circumstances has been in the same period equally remarkable and is on the rapid increase, would be an effort still bolder, and could only be attempted perhaps by those who keep their senses locked up. Twenty or thirty years in any country formed and featured similarly to England, is probably a period quite sufficient to change the outer surfaces of things and men, their

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fashions, habits, and manners; but situated as we have been, its operation seems to have had a much deeper and more lasting impression; and if we look back to similar periods of our history, we shall find them compared to this nearly as blank spaces.—The causes of these changes, whether political, moral, or physical, seem to have concurred and co-existed as in a circle, and are so numerous and powerful, that the slightest consideration of them is enough to prevent our surprize at their effects. Amidst the general motion and fermentation which has raged around us, amidst the desolating shocks which the European family of nations has sustained, how could England even with all her barriers and bulwarks remain unaffected, how could her resources last, how could her social edifice remain unmoved? Wars, revolutions, and political tumults, are the true school for the public mind to keep moving and turning in, true moral volcanos,

laying waste all around their crater, and creating fresh, green, and lively productions, with their widely-hurled lava. What else have the kingdoms of the Continent known for the last thirty years : and how could England remain untroubled and uncorrupted amidst such a mass of agitation ? Extraordinary times and extraordinary men (mutual results) are the age we have witnessed ; the storm has subsided, but the waters still heave, and the ruins and wrecks thrown around will always remind us of our perils.

But it is in the latter years of this eventful period that the changes in our characters seem to have principally been at work, and their effects to be principally conspicuous.—The excitement of a long and harassing warfare, in the interests of which every heart and home must have mingled, is now over.—While this war raged, we looked solely to ourselves ; our neighbours were unknown to us ; we were

a people of home and tied down to our fire-sides. Our features were strongly marked, more strongly than in any other state similarly civilized; the ocean was our element, our relations were solely commercial, and ships were our true defenders. A state of peace seems, if not unnatural, almost unnational to us; it seems a state of morbid stagnation, and were it not for what we have lost, would seem a state of Plethora. We are now closely mingling with our neighbours, associating with materials perfectly unlike our own, giving to and taking from each other parts and portions of character, and thus losing those barriers strong and stern in which, like the barriers of our Isle, we once prided ourselves and prospered. The lines and shades are becoming less distinct: we are becoming a people of the world instead of a people of home, enlarged and expanded in our views, and only viewing our country with reference to those around it.

This however is but a slight source among the many which seem to have wrought a change in us; others more powerful and operating more directly have contributed, either primarily or secondarily; and all seem so mixed up together, that they cannot well be separated. Among these may be chiefly ranked the decline of Commerce and Manufactures, and the increase of Population and Poverty. Not only our Moral but our Monied Supremacy has suffered. Instead of our Markets abroad and our Ships to defend them, we have now other relations and other defenders. Instead of a Manufacturing we are becoming a Military people, and the crosses, orders, and decorations of the day, shew the turn in the tide of our glory. Indeed the decline of our commerce and manufactures, and the increase of our poverty and population, seem to have followed each other step by step. In losing the one we have been losing our national stock of sub-

sistence, and in gaining the other we draw from a stock already diminished, and are thus reduced to other ways and means to obtain fresh supplies.

To enter however into the causes remote or proximate by which these changes in the condition of our society have been produced and are still producing, is very far from the business of these pages. Each of them (whether it be long wars, change from war to peace, mixture with our neighbours, decline of commerce, manufactures, and agriculture, increase of population, increase of public debt and distress, &c. &c.) may afford not only a chapter but a book, and this I leave to others. Nor does it by any means belong to my purpose to attempt to throw any new light on the effects they have created. These effects speak for themselves; every year seems to add to these changes, every year shews some fresh feature

of character ; we have arrived at a new epoch and seem approaching to another. A new order of things seems to have set in ; the lights of the new times are still moving, and those of the old getting dim ; new streams are flowing in, and where they will end we know not. Respect for antiquity and ancient institutions is crumbling, the bondage of the old schools is diminishing. The sacredness of the Pulpit holds less in awe, the dignity of the Bench holds less in terror, moral and social order seem shaken, scepticism like a fiend seems stalking through the land, party spirit like a monster seems swallowing up those feelings in which we once boasted, the old spirit of our nation ceases to animate us, the old ties of our country cease to entwine us, things are moving, men are thinking for themselves, and steering by their own lights ; it seems almost an age of genius and innovation ; and these seem mounted on the pile where

Learning and Antiquity are crumbling. But genius appears the birthright of such changes as we have undergone, their protégé, their fire, their ornament. When Rome was on the verge of distraction and defeat, her warriors and statesmen shed new lights; but what followed in each succeeding age? Are we hastening towards those storms which shook the ancient mistress of the world from her foundations? are the present stars of our horizon (and when had we so many) the forerunners of such? and have not signs of the times, much less striking than those which surround us, been the immediate heralds of revolutions in other times and other countries not far removed from our own?

That these changes have commenced will be perhaps admitted by even the blindest; that they have far advanced will be feared by many; and it is only for the purified vision of posterity to trace their progress

and effects. This progress may be slow, but it may be steady; the wheels once put into motion will scarcely be retroverted, and nothing but circumstances equally powerful with those of their creation can arrest them. If, as is said, the affairs of the moral as of the physical world have a constant tendency to the figure of a circle, if the political metempsychosis has any more solidity about it than a dream or fable, we may still have hopes for a return of the by-gone glory of our country, although it may be future ages alone who will witness it. But if instead of a circle, it is by a chain that the affairs of nations keep moving; if like individuals their ages of vigour, decay, and death follow each other and form the links, must we not say that England has seen her greatest days? If with Bacon we agree that Merchandize and Manufactures only flourish in the decline of a state, and if with Montesquieu we find that luxury (taking it in the large sense of

the term) forms one of the last of these links, must we not think that she approaches her national climacteric. She has given her light, her life, and her liberty to other nations ; she has sheltered them with her arms, and adorned them with her arts ; and even if her sun is setting, its last ray will be that of glory : but perhaps in her, as in other and grand states, ages not very remote may, like the ages of old, be wrapped up in darkness and barbarism.

The general character of this state of things as affecting the present frame of society, must even to common eyes appear obvious. The moralist, the philosopher, and the politician, in looking at the past, may easily sketch the future ; but the common observer who can only retire from the busy crowd and see for himself, will easily see effects daily passing before him, at which he would formerly have been surprised and

pained. Into these however it is not our business to enter any further than what falls under our immediate design.

Among the changes which modern times have exhibited amongst us, there is not one more remarkable than the general diffusion of new science and the spirit of discovery. Although this has been and generally is the result of such changes in other states, yet with us it seems to have operated in a very peculiar manner. New necessities have become the parents of new inventions, but they have interfered with old principles and old feelings. A moral and political liberty unknown elsewhere has induced a liberty of thought, speech, and the press, with us formerly unknown ; but this liberty has too often become libertinism. A new empire of intellect seems to have set in ; a new species of mental machinery seems to move us, at least to work in a new manner. Society is every day more

and more mixing, not only with those whose minds have become enlarged and enlightened by travel, but also with those in whom the fine edge of old British feeling has been blunted and worn ; and even of those who remain at home while the new lights of their country are beaming around them, there are alas ! too many who have forgotten their patriotism. Among the various luxuries and corruptions to which we have arrived, there is none more striking than that of our language ; and at the rate we at present proceed it will almost require a new Dictionary every ten years to lop off exuberances. This alone marks the decline not only of our ancient *learning*, but our ancient spirit ; whilst it marks also the diffusion of our science, because a fresh stock of ideas will always create a fresh stock of science to clothe them in. When were our libraries ever so crowded ; when did our press ever so groan under its weight ; when did ever knowledge

assume with us so many shapes, and forms, and sizes, as at present? Our natural and national resources having grown weaker, the pride that created and supported them has grown weaker also, and pride of a very different kind has started up in its place. What remains of the enormous mass of wealth we once had in circulation, is not only confined to fewer large channels, but every way reduced in quantity; commercial speculation has declined; England is no longer the great Continental Bazaar; other markets can meet her and destroy her monopoly:—our manufacturing interests have suffered still more; and as to agriculture, the changes in the prices of our provisions fully shew its state. Our wealth having thus declined in every source, the pride of amassing it seems to have declined also; but our increased population, requiring fresh channels through which what remained might flow, fresh resources and means of livelihood be-

came necessary. Thus then a new spirit has started up, commercial have given way to scientific speculations, our counting houses are giving way to our College classes, we seek for higher combinations, we are becoming a nation of Scavans and Artistes. Science is now the order of the day; sometimes it is pure, sometimes it is mixed, but always it is practical and efficient; for there is something in the genius of our country so forcibly propelling us to what may be called *business*, that we shall never be idle, whether in good or evil.

Amongst the present signs of the times therefore, there is perhaps none more prominent than the pride of profession, which now, and for the latter few years, has so distinguished us. As the mercantile and other ranks are falling, those of what may be termed professional life are filling up with a zeal and a rapidity, which, were there no other indi-

cation of our change of character, would alone prove it. Indeed how can it be otherwise in a country situated and civilized similarly to England? where moral energy and activity form such prominent traits, where such a mass of wealth even still exists, and where this mass is so unequally distributed. When the accustomed resources of such a state undergo the least decline or derangement, it is easy to conceive the rapidity with which the social edifice must feel the shock; matters are almost immediately put out of their place; sources of subsistence which in other times would have been called factitious, are opened; the wealth previously amassed flows through new and diversified channels, becomes more fertilizing, and therefore always able, more or less, to support those sources, because they all lie within each other. But when again this mass of wealth becomes suddenly reduced by being drawn off into other countries, and when to

this is to be superadded a great increase of population, matters again become altered; the money is more driven back to its old narrow channels; the passion of hoarding commences; and the new sources becoming in their turn more dried up, begin to subdivide, because the pressure becomes equal at all points.—Here, therefore, we are furnished, perhaps with a much more forcible cause of the increase of professional life, than what we have hitherto mentioned. Here also we see the difficulty of assigning the proportion that should exist between population and profession, because in this moving state of things, this proportion must move also; both may keep pace and be supported for a time; but the draining and hoarding systems still continuing, the resources at length must become wasted, and altogether deranged. We now therefore see the roads to fame and fortune trodden by a new race of men; and although they present a much greater number of bye-

paths than formerly, yet they appear so blocked up and trodden on, that it seems to require new and peculiar powers to undertake the journey.

Of these professions, there is not one perhaps, more increased or increasing than that of *Medicine*, or one which has undergone more remarkable changes of character and constitution. Every branch of it seems to have suffered alterations, more or less, even in the last ten years; and to say that the number of their followers and practisers has been increased in the proportion of four to one, would not perhaps be an exaggerated average statement. Indeed in the higher ranks of the profession this ratio seems under the reality. The time is not far gone by, when diseases and doctors bore some proportion to each other, and where the term doctor had, as in days of old, something, if not of sacredness, at least of orthodoxy about it.

This was what some would call the good olden time, when honest credulity was abroad; when feelings and ideas were fresh, simple, and uninquiring; when men allowed others to think for them, unless in their own immediate departments; when the lights of the schools were hallowed and venerated, and when worthy honest folks could safely consign the care of their bodies, as their brains, into the hands of a sacred few. This period, however, is gone by, and the present generation will, perhaps, be the last in which such folks will shew themselves.

But we have got to opposite extremes; we have witnessed, and still witness, revolutions in our science, as in our profession; for what indicates revolutions of all kinds, more than the rapidity with which extremes meet? In quiet times, changes take place link by link; both hang upon, and fall into each other; and the basis formed has at least the merit

of solidity. If we look back to the history of Medicine, shall we not find its government like that of a republic, where the lights were always irregular, the basis easily moved, and the course that of extremes? The effects of these shocks have at all times been remarkable, their causes very clear, and never more so than at present. Indeed a new set of causes seems now to have set in, and almost change the physiognomy of our science. Let us, however, distinguish here between the science and the profession, between the body of principles and practices it presents, and those into whose hands it has fallen. It is not so much from changes in the former, (although these have been immense,) that we are to look for future results, as those in the latter. We must look to the dislocated circumstances of our country; and when have they appeared more striking than at present? To deny that amidst the late changes and shocks our science has received advantages

the most *solid* and *permanent*, would be as absurd as to deny the common virtues of revolutions ; but whether among the new and dazzling lights that now beam upon it, its future march will be as generally beneficial to mankind, is a question well worthy of our inquiry. It is perhaps difficult to determine whether extreme scepticism, or extreme credulity does most injury to the cause of medicine ; and this would seem the age of both. We must recollect that in changes like those of the present and latter times, the transition between these extremes is, as was before observed, most rapid. We must recollect that at all times it is most difficult to draw the line between them. We must recollect that the character of these changes is quite unlike that of former times ; and that, therefore, modern sceptics, like modern quacks, form new and distinct classes. To what are we to ascribe this new æra ? is it to the sudden overthrow of old principles and opinions, and

the building up of new ones? is it to the changes which the science has received in the *quantity* and *quality* of those by whom it is professed and practised?

Indeed with regard to quantity we may safely say, perhaps, that not only has it exceeded the proportionate increase of our population, (if such a proportion could be established,) and the decrease of our production, but has outstripped its colleague professions far away. Why has it done so? We have not become a more unhealthy people than formerly; the common term of life seems in no wise diminished; our diseases have not been more destructive, notwithstanding our diet and our drugs: for the improved state of our art on the one hand, has more than counterbalanced, (although irregularly), the improved state of our vices and luxuries on the other. Instances of longevity are as common with us now as they were three hundred years since;

the list of our *real* maladies is not increased, although the *nominal* one may be by some writers and system-mongers ; some of those formerly considered national scourges are now almost deprived of their virus, as small-pox, lues venerea and contagion ; and in short our population has increased nearly five millions in the last twenty years. Thus then the mass of public health and strength would seem increasing, whilst the number of its ministers and guardians is increasing also, and in a much greater ratio.

When the profession of any science intimately connected with the welfare and existence of society, supported by public confidence, and strongly mixed up with public prejudices, becomes manifestly overdone ; when the proportion of its followers manifestly exceeds the number of those for whom it is necessary, the consequences soon become obvious ; the public and the profession both

suffer, both lose confidence; and although the former seldom thinks for itself on these matters, yet it now becomes suspicious of the purity, both of the science and its practitioners; the charm is broken, and every man is tempted to become his own lawyer, physician, &c. It matters not how the science in itself is exalted, it matters not what real and positive advancements and improvements it has received, the public are no judges of this; and even the most wise and philosophic portion of that public, will judge more of the rank of a science by the rank of its professors. We need not go back to the days of Plato and Aristotle to learn the contempt and ridicule, which, (although contemporary with Hippocrates,) they threw upon physic, when the number of doctors became too great at Athens.

There are those, and the number is very considerable, who will maintain that the

present improved state of medical science results solely from its more extended cultivation, and *the greater number of hands* into which it has fallen. This opinion is well worth investigation, from the great popularity it seems to hold : and here, perhaps, in the first instance, we should distinguish between the mechanical and speculative portions (if I may be allowed the term,) of the science, between pure surgery and pure physic. In the former, it may perhaps be truly said that "practice makes perfect;" and hence we see that its modern improvements and operations have been bolder and brighter than those of its sister branch. But we know that exercises of the hand and head are regulated by very different laws. We know if practice often makes the one perfect, theory often makes a dream of the other. We know that our Anatomy and Physiology stand in very different aspects from each other : in the one, all seems clearly laid down and settled, and each

discovery hangs more or less upon its predecessor: in the other, the whole chain is often deranged, and our new lights put out the old; new dogmas and doctrines are constantly throwing new features around it; and instead of new facts resulting from observation and experience, we have often only new fancies and new chimeras. That a more diffused collision of sentiments and opinions will throw out a greater number of sparks on any speculative subject, we all know; but of what nature is the light resulting? "We have never so much to say" Condillac tell us, "as when we set out from false or doubtful principles."

But let us look to the real source of those improvements which modern Medicine speaking generally has received, and we shall find that it is not from direct but collateral causes that these improvements have taken place. Let us look to that spirit of general science

and discovery, that now and of late has so strikingly pervaded us. It is to the bold and hardy genius of research, in all the connecting and auxiliary branches of knowledge, that we must look for these improvements ; it is in the spirit of the age that we shall find them. Let us only look at the new aspect which our modern natural philosophy and chymistry has assumed, the new basis it has received—let us look to the improved state of our animal chymistry, a state not subject to the derangement of new theories, but founded on the test of analysis and experiment : let us recollect that the alliance between Medicine and Chymistry is of a very modern date, and that our Physicians, previous to the last half century, were as ignorant of Chymistry as the Chymists were of Physic : in short, let us look to our new era of science. When have we seen such active and indefatigable investigations of the three kingdoms of nature as now and lately ? When have we seen moral

and physical man so investigated? When have we seen such crowded schools, classes, and colleges at home? When have we seen our Scavans so diffused abroad, traversing the globe in all directions, bearing all privations, braving all climates, and bringing back every day new spoils and new treasures? When have we seen such a profusion of philosophical works and papers issue from our press? Can we wonder that in this vast and varied circle of new light, our science has made such rapid though irregular strides? or can we wonder at the present boldness and bravery of our flights? In the hands of our Physicians, poisons the most virulent have now lost their horror. In the hands of our Surgeons the knife will fearlessly approach organs the most vital—remedies are sought for and obtained where they never were thought to exist; cures are performed that would be formerly called miracles. The geography and history of our frame would

seem settled on a new basis ; and we need not mention our improvements in morbid Anatomy and practical Pathology : the very face of our Philosophy has almost changed, and elements and compounds take place of each other ; the principle of life is no longer considered an Archæus, its laws are sought for in the laws of matter ; and in short it might be supposed on a first glance, that our science was shaking off its old title of “rational empiricism.”

Indeed there is not perhaps a more striking feature in the history of our modern knowledge, nor one which more eminently distinguishes us from other nations even the most enlightened, than the investigation which the study of our species has undergone, both moral and physical ; both have been connected and assimilated with each other. With the Antients, the history of the human mind we know was seldom attended to ; wars, battles,

and bloodshed being the general themes of the day, the physical man is constantly introduced through their page; and from the rudeness of the weapons employed, bodily strength was of the first consequence; hence the very early institution of the games in Greece and Rome, and the honours paid to their Athletæ, Gladiators, and Wrestlers. But we do not find that their knowledge even of man, the animal, ever advanced much beyond outward forms and figures; and although their Phidias's and Praxiteles's must claim the admiration of ages the most distant, yet we must regret they never dipped deeper, and that the scalpel was not oftner substituted for the chisel. In modern France, causes not very dissimilar have operated, and results not very dissimilar, except in their anatomy, have appeared. The physical man is alone brought on the stage, the physical sciences alone attended to, their moral philosophy has retrograded as their natural

philosophy has advanced ; all their lights in the former branch have been borrowed from ours, and since the days of Helvetius they have not had one worthy to adorn it. The labours of the Polytechnic schools have absorbed every thing but the arts and sciences of the senses. The animal powers of man were solely necessary and solely brought into requisition ; they have been dissected and discussed with a minuteness almost mathematical,—Mathematics being the order of the day. Anatomy has been enrolled under the exact sciences, and Physiology might have been so too, had she been less fugitive and fickle. Whilst we admit however that their investigations in the former have been more precise perhaps, and their lights in the latter more brilliant than ours, we must consider how far the application of these sciences to the general objects of the healing art has advanced ; we must consider how far the common cause of Medicine, taken either

as an art or science, either as the knowledge of cure or prevention, has been benefitted; and this the present state of their clinical *practice* abundantly testifies. With us, man both in his sound and diseased states has undergone a most complete investigation, the laws of both have been simultaneously deduced, the principles of disease have been carefully analyzed, their limits carefully marked. The lights of morbid and comparative anatomy have given to our pathology, a basis quite unknown to our neighbours, and observation and study have triumphed over dogmas and delusions.

This elevated state of Medicine at present is of course most flattering; its effects are not confined to the age in which we live, but may shed its benefits on ages yet unborn. This however is not the point of view in which we are to consider it now; we must look to darker sides of the picture, we must

ask ourselves, will its future progress be in a similar ratio, will it even hold its present ground? When we compare the number of those by whom improvements have been made, or even in whom a moderate zeal for its interests has existed, with the number of those who by various ways and means have disfigured and disgraced it, we shall find a most lamentable disproportion indeed. Let its devotees be ever so pure and enlightened, let their principles and practises be ever so honourable and honest, Medicine from its very nature as an art, must ever abound in fallacies; and as a science we see it so adulterated with the passions and prejudices of mankind, that its approaches to any thing like perfection must ever be slow and feeble. How much more then must this progress be retarded and embarrassed when it falls into the hands of those who instead of zeal for its lights seek only to obscure them. In its sister professions, Divinity, and Law, taken

as sciences, the basis is fixed, the letter is clearly laid down, the spirit is clearly understood, and although Professors may misinterpret both, yet the effects cannot last long, and the tribunal of appeal is always obeyed in its dictates. But in Medicine it is far otherwise, its frame and constitution are of necessity weak, because conjecture and theory form a large portion of it; there is neither such a fixed basis of support, nor such a firm tribunal of decision, and therefore the strength of the science must depend more on the strength of its Professors. Although the boldest and brightest discoveries will now and then challenge the admiration both of the public and ourselves, yet it is not from these we will take our estimates. It is more from simple diseases, and from the character of practitioners that the public will judge; while this is preserved, the course of the science must always make steadier approaches to a firm basis, and though less abounding in

stars will more abound in light. Where is the Physician who even in these days is not constantly baffled with failures in the simplest and commonest diseases? Who of us is there, whose credulity is not every day besieged with the recital of cures the most extraordinary and cases the most improbable? How can our science be extolled even in its highest flights when these flights are so often irregular, when *miracles* and *mistakes* so closely tread on each other, and when their authors are so often at variance. It is in the most common diseases that the general case of the public health depends, and it is from their diminution or alleviation that the public opinion as to the rank and character of our science is taken. When the number of practitioners far exceeds the number necessary for the public wants, and when the common mass of disease is not *proportionately* diminished, matters appear obvious to all eyes, suspicion of purity becomes strong, and thus

public confidence (our great basis of support) becomes weakened. But this is not all ; it is not merely the respectable portion of the Profession that suffers, but the science itself :—zeal for its interests in the minds of the few becomes stifled by zeal for their own interests in the minds of the many :—changes of quantity bring with them changes of quality ; the principles and materials of Medical education varying in different individuals, differences of opinion on points the most simple arise ; even the real improvements which the science has already received become doubted and distrusted ; the stimulus to future improvement becomes blunted ; the ranks in the profession become mixed and jumbled ; regulars and half regulars wage war with each other ; each defends his particular rights and those of his school ; and recruits and pretenders interfere and carry away the prize.

All these however form but a portion of the many sources direct and indirect, which must affect the state of our science and profession, and to attempt tracing the whole would indeed be an Augean effort. They form however the striking feature of the present Medical character, they form the principal pivot on which its future destiny must hang. It is to the disjointed circumstances of our country that we must look for these changes, it is from the extraordinary redundancy of the Profession that our fears both as to the science itself and to public reputation must arise; and hence it becomes the leading topic in the present inquiry.

The causes of this redundancy have hitherto been only generally noticed, let us now look into them particularly. We have become a poorer people and a more scientific people; at the same time the pride of profession has succeeded the pride of Commerce; and that

of Medicine, carrying with it an equal degree of popularity and a less difficulty of attainment as to its common requisites than the others, has become one of the first objects to which the attention of parents is directed; the education necessary for it is conceived to be less expensive and tedious, whether at the University, the Hospital, or the Shop: its spirit falls in with the family pride of the day, and far removes them (they flatter themselves) above the vulgar: its profits present less risk and speculation, less hang upon the fluctuations of patronage, and come sooner into action: its prospects whether of fame or fortune, seem more widely and fully thrown open, and merit seems *at first sight* to have more direct and immediate chances of success. While the war raged, our Fleets and Armies required a constant and continued fund of Medical aid; and from the system on which the establishments of both were conducted, particularly that of the latter, talents and

industry were sure to meet with their merits. A field so fresh, so fair, so honourable, was thus newly thrown open, a new stimulus was created, prospects bright and chivalrous were presented, profits solid and certain were held out, crowds flocked to the schools, went through their ordeal and entered the field. As the termination of the war approached, our exertions increased, Medical aid became more and more necessary, our armies required an unceasing fund, merit was sure to find its reward from the admirable police of the department, the crowds at the schools increased three and four-fold, and Medical education was the order of the day.

This state of things has now ceased, we have fallen from the high excitements and have every way suffered except in our glory. The demand for Medical aid has ceased, crowds have been thrown back on the quiet stream of peace and private life, at periods

and with habits too advanced to turn to other sources, and with finances too slight to render them independent. But this is far from all ; although the doors so widely thrown open by the public wants are now closed, yet the doors of the schools are held as open as ever, both for entrance and exit ; crowds still flock to them, and crowds still issue from them ; the impression which the war created, has left an artificial stimulus ; what seemed a temporary tide still flows ; Medical speculation is still afloat ; and when to this we add the sources we have already noticed, and which seem every day increasing, we may easily learn that our colleges and classes are much more crowded than ever.

These changes must mark a new era in our profession ; the redundancy of practitioners is increased and increasing every day, whilst their necessity is diminishing every day. Whilst war raged, the stock though

rapidly growing in one source, was rapidly diminishing in another; but now there scarcely seems any vent for the overstock which our laid-up fleets and armies have diffused over society, unless perhaps it is in our colonies abroad, where from our increased emigrations the tide of population seems fast swelling: but even this seems totally insufficient to contain the growing numbers; a triple source of increase seems established; every year throws out a fresh supply; we see our Medical men diffused over the continent, practising in the cities and towns; and as to the numbers remaining at home, if each were to confine his attention and practice to one organ or one disease alone of the system, there would seem more than enough, according to the present rate and that which now appears established.

The number of students in the general branches of education and science at the

University of Edinburgh, has increased nearly in the proportion of three to one between the years 1800 and 1810—between 1810 and 1815 this proportion was much greater—between 1815 and 1820 greater still, and in the last and I believe the present session, the number exceeds 2000, a number greater than at any other University in Europe. Those of Dublin and Glasgow, have advanced at nearly a similar rate. Of these schools the greater proportion of the Students are Medical; indeed at Edinburgh they form nearly three to one. Here a very large proportion of these Students aim at the “summos honores,” and it does not require any extraordinary consumption of the midnight oil or number of years to become crowned with Galen’s gown. The proportion of Graduates here seems to have increased at least four-fold, in the last ten years; every year adds to this proportion, and sends out a fresh supply of Doctors. If to all these whom we

may and must call *regulars*, we add the irregulars; if we include the Aberdeen and St. Andrew's diplomas, &c.; if with these we mix up the immense proportion of Surgical Students that issue and have issued from the Dublin and Glasgow schools, and the London hospitals and shops; and if in the rear we bring up the crowds of self dubbed Doctors, &c. &c. &c. and others too numerous to mention at present, we soon can form an estimate of the state our Profession has arrived at.

What are the consequences of this redundancy? how does the frame of the science become affected? a science which has for its pedestal public benefit and public opinion, and for its ornament the purity of the schools. A science which let its practice be ever so pure, many think a tissue of hypotheses, and more think a tissue of absurdities. But let us add to this redundancy those

sources of adulteration which would even seem to result from its own nature, and let us see what effect this redundancy must have on these sources. From the earliest ages the healing art we need not mention has been debauched and debased more than any other with the superstitions and errors of man. Bacon tells us there never was but one rational Physician up to his time, viz. Hippocrates; and in days long posterior to Bacon, we see the practice and principles of even its luminaries, as Sydenham, Mead, Molyneux, Radcliffe, &c. disgraced too often with mystery and masquerade. The rapid and steady diffusion of sound light which late days have exhibited, is very far from having redeemed us from those stigmas, and we are still the "shuttlecocks of fortune, and the jests of the wise." Among the many striking features, which have so peculiarly distinguished our genius and country, there is none more forcible or extraordinary, whether

in its causes or characters, than credulity ; no where has it assumed more varied shapes, no where has its code been so broken down into separate parcels ; there has been a boldness and a desperateness in our modes of believing, and thinking, and acting, so totally unknown in other nations around us, that even to this day "Bizarrerie" (which with them almost amounts to Barbarism) is one of the leading brands with which they mark us. A free government, plenty of money, and the habits of enterprize, created by commerce, have been the materials of this credulity ; they have engendered a spirit of speculation which not confining itself within its original boundaries, has overrun our other institutions, and thus gives them that character of adventure which so strikingly distinguishes them. Among these institutions we may easily conceive that Medicine has come in for a full share, when we look to the elements of which it consists. Indeed our moral creeds

seem scarcely more varied than our Medical in many respects ; and perhaps there are no traits of character that sooner strike a foreigner on his arrival with us than the appetite with which drugs and humbugs are swallowed.

Whether the approaches we have latterly made towards the perfection of our science, at least towards a diminution of its uncertainties, has diminished that diversity of opinion which so many separate thinkers must produce, or in other words, whether Quackery in the common sense of the term is on the retreat, the advance, or the halt, we shall soon stop to enquire into. However it be, it seems now to have formed an established portion of our national character ; and perhaps there is not a more striking anomaly in the history of British mind than the career it has created, or the ravages it has committed.

In France the spirit of Medical credulity is very great also, but like most other of these codes is tied down into one general code beyond which it seldom or ever breaks. Uniformity, pettyness and tameness are its character ; boldness and desperate speculation are unknown ; and probably Drs. Solomon and Brodum have made more fame and fortune than all the Paris Quacks put together.

With us every man can set up for himself, no matter what his previous vocation may have been ; beginners in all trades are encouraged ; a knowledge of men and manners he finds much more important than a knowledge of Medicine, and this together with a little money (for what can we do without it?) he lays up as his first stock. He commences by lamenting the miseries of Quackery, tells us of the dreadful scourges it inflicts, and of the interest he feels for his fellow-man. Shrewdness, cunning and intrigue being his every

day-tools, he finds narrow lanes preferable to high roads, and very few holes and corners can escape him. The appellation of Doctor is soon obtained, for even yet it has not lost its charm. Language, formerly so pure and chaste a vestal, but now alas such a prostitute, soon decks out and adorns the columns of his cases. Cures the most inviting, pills, powders, and elixirs the most tempting, are offered to our greedy appetites in every way that gilding, ornament or ingenuity can suggest. Lottery bills themselves are not more reviving, disease the most desperate is promised not only relief but extinction, the bitters of life are threatened with expulsion by bitters of another kind, and the beauties of the golden age are promised to all those who approach the sacred shrine.

The subject of public Quackery however, seems almost threadbare with us, and the very mention of it promotes suspicion. Whether

it is on the increase or decline is not easy to determine precisely, but it does not at least form a new feature in the Medical character of the present day. We are now so well accustomed to its hackneyed, wasted, and withered forms, and it has been so often scourged that little more remains to be done. Indeed it is difficult to find out any new weapon in its attack ; all have been used and blunted ; all the figures of Rhetoric, all the flowers of Poetry have been thrown away upon it ; rhyme, reason, and ridicule have in vain lashed it with their rods, and we seem just as fond of it as ever. It will perhaps reign with us more or less until the barriers of our character are completely broken down, but the disease will never probably get beyond its present level, and will in time work its own cure.

But let us consider that Quackery is a Genus of many species, and that these species differ

so much from each other, that we can scarcely recognize them. Public and private quackery are as distinct and different in their properties as possible: the former comparatively to the other is simple and innocent, it shews itself in broad day-light, and its forms soon become conspicuous; seldom troubling itself with the heavy harness of the schools or science, it only appears in that simple but strong language which always lays a hold of broken hopes and broken hearts: it is a bright land of promise where all is comfort and consolation, where naked facts seem scattered about, and where, as in the court of Chancery, we have the solid ground-work of precedent to stand on. How different is this from private quackery? here the forms and figures are dark and concealed, and their motions so perfectly Protean and insinuating, that it requires the most exercised eye to detect them: here the origin and derivation of the term *Quack* shews itself in its true harlequin character: here the

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solemnity of science and learning throw in their aid, and the language employed is classical, and according to the schools; our hopes and fears are excited according to system, the "modus operandi" of Medicine is boldly talked of, and cures are promised, not only on the strength of precedents but on the strength of pathology.

Here therefore is the species of quackery that in these days so strongly shews itself, and so universally abounds; compared to this the advertizing quackery of former days was trifling in its effects, because less pretending and more candid; indeed patent Medicines are rather beginning to lose their charms since the new species has started up; we have therefore exchanged one for another, and whether we are to be gainers or losers seems not a difficult problem to solve. In many cases, however, the two species have formed an alliance, and mingled their pro-

perties together ; the stern dogmatist has stooped to listen to the benefits of experience, and the pliant empiric has become more solemn and stiff in his new coat of mail.

To comment on the ravages and wounds which these two monsters have inflicted on our science would indeed be a sorry undertaking ; but it is the latter which at present assumes such formidable and such destructive attitudes, as shall be attempted to be more fully shewn by and by.

That the reign of private quackery has materially flourished since the late redundancy of the profession, cannot admit of a doubt, and the causes are obvious. Indeed it would almost appear on looking at the annals of both, that they have kept accurate pace with each other ; and if we look carefully to their present state and progress, we shall clearly find that they constitute the

two great maculæ which mark the present Medical character. Can we wonder then that the high roads to fair science and reputation are too narrow for the motley crowd of aspirants? can we wonder that the little dirty paths of intrigue, cunning, and plodding knavery are so full, and that livelihoods are gained at the expence of every virtue of head or heart that can do honour to our nature? That this is the true naked state of the case, it would be a mixture of gross folly and delusion to deny; and to pretend that the practitioners of enlarged and enlightened views form any thing like a proportion in the present numbers, would be paying the profession a most injurious and unmerited compliment. These few no doubt form still a strong and sacred band, they still hold up their well earned and honourable fame, and with it endeavour to hold up the rank and character of the science. They are the beacons on the rock to which we

look up for light ; but how long they are to resist the increasing tide that now threatens their base, must depend much on themselves, but not on themselves alone. The age in which names have governed the world is going by, and new ages and new lights now break around us. We have become a scientific people, and the claimants of fame have now become so numerous, that most of the old roads to her temple seem deserted.

But if the fame-hunters have become so numerous, how much more so are the fortune-hunters ? That we are naturally a money-hunting people, and that even our sciences, and learning, and purest institutions have been adulterated with this spirit, has been told us more than two centuries ago, by some even of our most partial neighbours. That this natural propensity has since increased at a most rapid rate admits of very little doubt. Montesquieu, who is as much

our eulogist as a Frenchman thinks he can safely be, tells us candidly there are only two things we esteem, *money* and *honour*. Although the pride of amassing seems latterly to have given way to a different kind of pride, as has been mentioned before, yet constituted as society is in England, it will always perhaps form a strong national trait. From old habits it has become a principle, and from new necessities this principle has now become a portion of our character. We are even still a buying and selling people, although not a "nation of shopkeepers." Commerce we must admit has inoculated with her virus the greater portion of our habits, practices, and professions, and there seems a commercial colour even in our sciences and in every thing around us. But it is not from these sources alone that we have acquired it. We are a more bustling people than our neighbours, and we are more obliged to be bustling. Life in England seems often a

stormy stream; its wear and tear seem greater; its tide more rough and rapid than around us; its business more difficult; our climate and its unevenness create wants which must be satisfied; and this often leads to wishes which must be gratified. We are not like our neighbours satisfied with a little; we must have that peculiar thing called *comfort*; our climate, civilization, and customs demand it; and the only way to procure it is by *purchase*. Money therefore is with us the "primum mobile," the great vital principle without which every thing languishes and dies immediately; and if even our purest institutions have become adulterated with the essence of its spirit, it should neither be a subject of astonishment nor of censure.

Although Medicine like others of these institutions has come in for a full share of this essence, yet the pride of science that has latterly started up, would seem in some

measure to have neutralized it, as was before observed. Still however our necessities keeping more than equal pace with our external resources, and our population with our internal production, and the money we have made being confined in such unequal corners and channels, we are obliged to strike out fresh ones, where adventurers, speculators, and pretenders mingle in the common mass; where avarice, cunning, and quackery, assume such solemn and imposing shapes; where science is obliged to stoop down from her throne, and either lend herself to the follies or crimes of the day, or starve in her garret.

Were Medicine, as before observed, endowed with a greater stock of fixed and immoveable principles, were it as an art subject to a greater number of established rules and regulations than what we now possess, it would not be so difficult to dis-

tinguish the shades between the regular and irregular practitioners, and still easier between the irregular and impostor. But when we consider that hypothesis makes up a great part of its nature, and that to this day we are totally ignorant of the precise mode of action of some of our common medicines, because we are equally ignorant of some of the leading laws of life and organization; when we consider how our science has been buffeted about between the extremes of dogmatism and empiricism, and the vicissitudes and revolutions it has undergone in other respects; when we find that the talents of even its most enlightened and zealous votaries have too often but increased its uncertainties; when we find such perfect and positive differences of opinion between medical men, regularly and equally educated, on points apparently the most simple, at least on points constantly brought under discussion:—looking at all this, we cannot wonder that the question of medical

right and wrong, unless on the common stock of its fixed principles, is often difficult to decide, and that the whole is often thought a mere matter of opinion.

More particularly in the present times, when men seem more thinking for themselves, will this be the case; and notwithstanding the real advances we have made, they will often consider their causes and effects as directed by chance. Talents, learning, and industry have given us these advances; but they have been counteracted in other ways as far as public opinion goes. Indeed the epochs at which Medicine has made its greatest flights, seem to have been precisely the epochs in which it has been most disgraced by those into whose hands it has fallen; its greatest advances in one region have been obscured by some simultaneous follies or vices in others; and thus it seems to have struggled on between extremes to

the present day. In short it now almost may be likened to a field or rather common, where the palings and hedges are broken down, where all claimants and candidates are more or less mingled in a mass, where boldness and desperation are taken for talent; where silence and intrigue pass for learning and its mysteries.

Taking then into calculation the various circumstances which have produced this state of things, whether it be the redundancy of the profession and the changes in their qualities, the ravages of quackery both public and private, the new codes of credulity which our new lights have created; taking into calculation I say these circumstances, can we wonder at the present signs of the medical times? can we wonder that the future signs have worse augury? We need not rush into the lists of the disaffected, we need not become croakers; but with a true

and keen sense of devotion to the real interests of our science, with a sincere and heart-felt anxiety for the dignity of the profession, and with a full and firm conviction of the blessings it has bestowed on mankind, we cannot shut our eyes to these changes, and seeing them, we must regret them.

It may be asked what are these particular changes, what are these particular signs? Let him who asks this question only look abroad, and unless he is either stultified by delusion, or depraved by crime, he will see them; he will see the diminution of public confidence in the science and the profession. The age at which it is said a man must be a fool or a physician, viz. forty, seems now much reduced, and we see young and old their own physician or quack. Nurses, cooks, and old maids, were for ages the dispensing priests and priestesses at the Esculapian temple; they exerted their talents

often with success, and always with zeal; like the Lares and Penates they watched over the nursery with care and caution; and the mysteries of the science, unless on serious occasions, were always safely entrusted to them. These good old times are gone by; these oracles are now becoming dumb; Family Physic aims at higher flights; it attempts system, science, and classification; it has fallen into higher hands; the most educated scorn not to enter the lists; and it seems to become a species of public property where all have a share of opinion. Authorities even more classical than Messrs. Buchan and Reece and Co. are now sought for and are now the guides, but the old leaders are not forgotten; there is a charm, a simplicity, and captivation about these authors that is sure to fascinate all parties for a time; they throw open at once the bolts, bars, and locks of the labyrinth, without any of the dry dust of other books or schools, and soon

initiate their readers into the bright halls of science, without any trouble, time, or expense, except a few draughts on that credulousness with which we are all so bounteously blessed. We hear mothers talking 'as familiarly of calomel and bile, as they used formerly of camomile and brimstone ; indeed calomel seems quite a toy in their hands, and a most charming toy it is. Family Medicine-chests are now becoming a regular article of furniture, and their smiling contents are dabbled with on all occasions. Receipts in Cookery and recipès in Physic are changing places. Messrs. Buchan and Reece and Co. standing generally on the same shelf with the Bible, the Cookery book, and the Almanack, are diligently consulted on all occasions as well for prevention as cure : if matters get worse, the family Apothecary is perhaps called in ; his pills and draughts are always inviting ; they seem like a cordial balm that offers instant relief ; but alas ! they fail, matters get worse, serious

disease makes its progress, much less perhaps from its original nature than from the drugs by which it has been combated. The case at length becomes one of life and death, the skill of the mother, nurse, and cook, the charms of Messrs. Buchan, Reece, and the Medicine-chest, the consolations of the Apothecary, and the beauty of his pills, all go for nothing; as a last resource, the Physician is called in, and if he can undo all that has been done, he is both a lucky and a learned man.

That this is an every-day transaction, and that it is nearly the inverse order of that which reason points out, need not be told; but really in our Medicine, reason would seem to be solely governed by our passions and prejudices. Among other arguments made use of to defend this line of proceeding, perhaps one of the most cogent will be, "the Physician must have his fee in the first

instance, and this fee appears so large to give at once." Certainly we are grown a poorer people, and a guinea now a days carries greater authority with it than formerly, but let this guinea which in the first instance might have settled the business, be put in competition with the long and lingering expenses both of medicines and feelings which such a case must create; let it be held in one beam of the scale, while the vain regrets which we expend for the death of our nearest and dearest around us, and the still vainer sorrows which we shed at the idea of leaving undone what ought to have been done, are to be put in the other, and we shall soon see which is the heaviest.

To deny the value of Domestic Medicine applied under certain principles and restrictions, would be as absurd as to maintain that a physician should be called in on every deviation from perfect health, or that flies

should be killed with powder and bullets ; but that its use has been and is prostituted every day by its abuse, it would be a waste of words to deny. There would seem to be a certain line or point in our system to which nature allows herself to be drawn ; beyond this, her "vis medicatrix" struggles ; this soon ceases, fabric and function become altered, disease commences its progress and increases rapidly ; for every step which the "vis medicatrix" has formerly made, it now loses two or three ; perhaps the real nature of the disease itself when allowed to gain a certain stage is serious, perhaps (and what is infinitely more likely) it has been aggravated by misapplied Medicines. In the science of healing there is no axiom more firm than this, that "the knowledge of what ought to be *avoided* is of more importance than the knowledge of that which ought to be *done*." This however like most of our other axioms, the Quack laughs at and lays aside as not

belonging to him ; he thinks a little Medicine
 a good thing in all cases and times, at least
 that it can do no harm ; he thinks that our
 system, like an hydraulic machine, cannot work
 well in its wheels and tubes unless well oiled
 by his draughts ; he thinks that by certain
practices rather than certain *principles*, he
 can regulate all its derangements and dis-
 orders ; and he concludes that such a wheel
 will be restored to its motion by resorting
 to the same means which at former times
 caused similar derangements. He thus on
 the established rules of his art, that of a
 mechanic, applies similar remedies in what
 he conceives similar cases ; he thinks that
 Mechanical and Medical Empiricism are just
 the same, and that he can as soon mend
 a body as a watchmaker can mend a watch.

Need we look for a moment at the multi-
 plicity of shades and colours by which the
 pictures of health and disease are varied in

every individual? Need we see that our physical like our moral constitutions, though all similar in structure, are all different in features, and that those features are liable to be ever changing? Let us see the shades of temperament which characterize every one of us more or less; let us take into account the varieties of complexion and modes of action which every organ will assume from the application even of Diet, and still more of Medicine; let us take these organs, one, two, or three in their morbid states, and see how the morbid principle varies at different times, and under different circumstances; in fine, let us consider our system what it really is, not only endowed with more complicated delicacy of structure than the most fine spun mechanical instrument, but that to this delicacy are superadded principles and influences, which with regard to itself make it constantly changeful, and with regard to others, make it often totally dissimilar. When

we thus reason or even go half so far, we see the positive destructiveness of empirical principles; we see that they are as hurtful in Medical, as they are valuable in Mechanical science; we see that to him alone who possesses a profound knowledge of the fabric and functions of our system, the changes they undergo, the shades and complexions they acquire from disease, diet, temperament, medicine, &c. and the principles on which these changes are operated, to him alone belongs the knowledge of laying down that line at which art must supply the place of nature.

But what is there new in all this? Is it not a series of stale and oft-told truisms? and yet has our health, our morals, or our character been in the least benefited? Look at the crowds of hypochondriacs that haunt our baths and waters as ghosts haunt the Styx; look at the diffusion of disease both

real and imaginary throughout our land ; look at the catalogue of calamities which it unfolds ; look at the “*tædium vitæ*” which affords so prominent a trait of the English character ! In what country shall we find disease assuming such varied forms and figures ? in what country do we see suicide assuming so regular an arrangement ? What can produce all this ? it may be our climate, it may be our commercial character, the extraordinary shocks in the wheel of fortune which commerce creates, and the extremes of opulence and poverty which it exhibits ; it may be that we are by nature a phlegmatic people, with a heavy cold apparatus of senses hanging about us, which nothing but strong excitements can stir up ; it may be that our catalogue of wants, wishes, and luxuries has become so inordinate ; all these powerfully contribute of course ; but let us add to all these inordinate things, one of as great power as any of them, viz. the *inordinate love of drugs* which so eminently

distinguishes us, and which notwithstanding our justly boasted improvements in science, is even now greater than ever. If the history of the generality of those invalids who have been and are in the habit of crowding our waters and baths, and who are now so amply diffused over the continent, putting off ennui and disease be enquired into, it will I believe be found in a large proportion of cases to arise from misapplied Medicines, whether taken at their own suggestion, that of some kind friend, or that of some powerful public Quack. Indeed the national stock of our chronic diseases seems mostly made up of such cases; and none can be more embarrassing whether to the regular practitioner or the patient, because he is never perfectly ill or perfectly well, but always vaccillating between both.

The cases to which I principally allude, are those chronic inflammatory tendencies

which from a long latent and unsubdued character, have at length become almost constitutional. It is the hepatic and nervous systems that are generally concerned, and with these are mixed up every order and variety of derangement, delicacy, and debility, that the most zealous Nosologist could wish for. The simple elements of life and health being air, food, and water, it is evident that the simple sources of disease arise from changes in the quantity or quality of these; but the forms and habits of society have removed us such an immense distance from the simple paths of nature, that these sources become so complicated and modified that they almost give rise to a new system of diseases. The unevenness of our climate and our clothing certainly produces an abundant source of disease, but it is mostly referable to a part of our system in which the chronic character seldom prevails. Our pulmonary complaints generally admit of rapid modifica-

tions, their influence is partial, and does not long remain. It is in the irregularities of our *diet* that we must chiefly look for those numerous and varied species of disease to which we have alluded; these chiefly belong to a part of our system where the chronic character eminently resides, and where the general health is much more generally and permanently affected. From deranged states of the hepatic system, speaking largely and including the digestive organs, there is a wider diffusion of disease than from any other centre; because in this centre are contained not only the most vital organs, but organs that are constantly undergoing striking changes and modifications. When we look at the irregularities of our diet, whether as to quantity, quality, or periods, we cannot wonder that *liver* and *bile* have now become such familiar and such convenient terms; we cannot wonder that even with females they seem regular and permanent legacies going

down from one generation to another ; we cannot wonder that this is the age of *bile*. Chronic inflammation of the liver is the general character of these cases, and the variety and abundance of shapes which it assumes are as numerous as perplexing ; indeed it would seem with us the predominant class of acquired disease, and to distinguish in no small degree our nation and character.

In France hepatic disease seems rare, and as we approach the South still more so ; diet there seems better arranged, in *quality* it is more liquid and light, and in *quantity* better timed as to meals ; their modes of life being more connected with agricultural than commercial or manufacturing pursuits, their sources of food are more simple and natural ; and although to this the French system of cookery may seem a most hostile argument, yet we must recollect that its stimuli, its peppers, its poisons are nothing compared to

ours, together with its character being much less solid, hard and dry. Their diet and their diseases being lighter, it follows that their Medicines are lighter than ours. Calomel is almost as frightful to a French Physician as to a French patient ; and I have been seriously assured by two or three of eminence, that a small dose of Rhubarb could not be taken without three days' preparation of the system. In Germany and the Low Countries, and even amongst those more Northerly, where eating and drinking are more coarsely carried on, hepatic disease, speaking largely, is not near so abundant as with us, nor are their Medicines so much drawn from the mineral kingdom. With us all classes of society seem disposed more or less towards it ; the immoderate use of spirits, tea, and strong liquors of various sorts (not taking into account their adulterations) has diffused it as extensively through the lower orders, as our depraved system of cookery has through the

upper: all seem to participate in it, all seem to think that the strongest and most stimulating species of food can alone bear us up against the depressing influences around us. Look at the greater proportion of the inhabitants of our rich manufacturing and commercial towns; look at the greater proportions of our dinners, where peppers, pickles, pastry, salts, sweets, and every discordant element are jumbled together; look to what an important business these dinners and their appendages are, and we shall see how far the science of eating and drinking has advanced with us. Can we wonder that as our diet is so strong, our drugs must be strong? Can we wonder that the purgative system should be so much in vogue, and so much predominate in the general treatment of our diseases? Can we wonder that hepatic and nervous affections have advanced at an equally rapid rate, even without calculating on the annual importations of diseased livers, which

we make from our settlements abroad? Can we wonder at our crowds of invalids who like shattered crocks are seeking strength and freshness wherever they find it? Can we wonder at the roving spirit with which we are designated by our neighbours?

There is no organ in the system so influential on the moral character perhaps as the liver, and no where is this more manifest than with us. Although temperament is rather an element of individual than national character, yet in England we may be said to have a national temperament; climate has been the first creator of it, diet has followed; by the humidity, of the one, and the irregularities of the other, this organ has been so largely influenced, that I think it may well come in for a third share in forming our temperament. Let us only look at its Anatomical rank and connexions for a moment; placed in nearly the centre of the

system, it forms another centre of another system, where organs the most highly vital reside; its blood whether of nourishment or secretion is venous and deprived of oxygen; its nerves are very scarce, and it does not come into immediate contact with foreign matter like the stomach, or lungs; its sensibility is therefore dull, its vitality on a low but lingering scale, and its diseases therefore generally chronic, not confining themselves to their mere seat and origin, but diffusing themselves over the system in the most varied shapes. What must follow from all this, in the effects on the mind? they are similar with those of the body, weakness, weariness, despondence, and despair.

But perhaps the most curious feature of liver complaints is their connection with quackery, particularly that of the private kind: bilious crocks, and quacks seem to have formed now a more regular establish-

ment with us than ever, and to be almost synonymous. The hypochondriac flies to his drugs as the sinner or saint to his beads ; and if hope ever throws her ray around him, it is while he is swallowing them. As his diet has been strong, his drugs must be strong also he thinks ; he therefore goes on with his peppers and his pills, thinks that calomel will beat out his cayenne and currys, and thus with his darling poison in one hand, and darling antidote in the other, he lives on in broken mind and body, an object of pity to his friends, and a melancholy monument to all around.

Next to the liver, the stomach would seem to be the organ most propitious to quackery ; and it is not difficult to conceive from what we have already remarked, what a powerful aid it must afford with us. Quite unlike its neighbour, its attacks are generally short and acute, its structure quite nervous

and highly sensible, indeed it is almost a second brain, regulating the entire nervous department of the *organic*, as the first does of the *animal* life. The hard treatment which it receives from our diet and drugs, and the irregularity with which its business is conducted, may well assist to explain not only the great chapter of our bodily, but our mental derangements. In the hands of the Quack, the line between Poison and Medicine is unknown; by mistakes of proportion he converts them into each other, and by mistakes of mixture he renders both inert or injurious. Totally ignorant of the Chymical or Medicinal history of either, he works on in his old trade, applying them in cases where he has seen good before, and if one does not answer, he immediately tries another. The stomach takes in all; its nerves, and with them the whole nervous system, become deranged, and the entire constitution broken.

Between the affections therefore of these two organs created by our diet and drugs, we are, I think, furnished with a most leading source of our Quackery, at least a proximate and physical source; for as to the moral sources, we have already hinted at them. Various and numberless are the shapes and forms of the maladies resulting, as various indeed as the motives which produce them; and no class affords a more abundant or a more extraordinary set of patients, or one which more merits our compassion. With these patients there is always a most minute and intimate acquaintance with their symptoms and pains; they enter into them with a detail and accuracy almost classical, and quite unknown in other invalids and other maladies; they study and pore over Medical tracts and pamphlets, with an appetite which nothing can abate; and at length unless monopolized by aches and pains, become not only their own domestic physicians,

but feel a sincere pleasure in offering their services to their neighbours. Quackery like scandal lives and grows upon itself; one quack makes another; some few are private and keep their charms to themselves; some are too philanthropic for this, but give them out to the world; some aim at high flights and attempt science and classification; some regularly commence the study of Medicine on their own account and leave off all other pursuits. Thus there are all shapes and sizes, the half-educated of the new school, the quarter-educated, the pretender, the charlatan, and all down to the simple and good-natured man, all mix in the mass; the regulars cannot resist such a torrent, they must sometimes mix also; all prate and talk, all give the results of their experience and their opinions, and to say who is right and who wrong, would be a bold undertaking.

Thus therefore does our health, science

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and profession become mutilated and torn, and where are the tribunals to appeal to for redress? If we had a larger body of medical philosophers to look up to, whose dicta were decisive, and who like monuments or milestones would remain still while the new light was moving, or point out what road we should take, or how far we were to go, all this would never occur; but unfortunately not only is the *general* tribe of philosophers much diminished, but the charm of high names seems now to have vanished; and as to medical philosophers, it would almost seem that the present aspect of the science should almost deter and exclude all such. Were there even a more wide diffusion of an inferior rank, men who without aiming at lofty flights and equally despising crooked views, could direct their sole efforts to the steady advancement of the science and the science alone; a barrier would at all times be presented to the inroads of quackery and

ignorance ; but although we have many names now amongst us, which Medicine must always look up to as some of her most zealous and enlightened votaries, yet the number is not sufficient to resist the impending danger. The fashions of the day get around many, the current is often too strong, and even the most regularly qualified are at times obliged to give way.

Although to deny the uncertainty of our art, would be a species of delusion worse even than quackery itself, yet we well know that we have a certain stock of fixed rules and principles, by which we must always be guided and governed, and about which there never can be much difference of opinion ; but in truth the number of our axioms is comparatively small, nor is it on them that attacks will be made. Medicine has its modes more than other sciences, and always will have ; it has picked up a more extensive wardrobe on

account of the imperfections of its figure ; and although this figure can never become distorted altogether, yet from dress it may be so altered, that in the eyes of the vulgar it may appear a very different thing. More particularly will this happen at present in this new age of light, when we see that medical learning and medical talent are such different materials, when we hear that Greek and Latin are but of little use at the patient's bed-side, and that it is from quick-sighted observation alone, that the detection of disease must arise.

That the present epoch of the profession with respect to the redundancy that now appears, will not diminish the perplexities to which we have alluded, but add to them, must be expected. Admitting the education and qualifications of the newly initiated to be respectable, there will always be differences of opinion from differences of this

education and other sources. The dogmas of the schools, the theories and visions of favourite authors, the wars between systems, &c. ; all these and various other embarrassments will come across the commencing practitioner, and though in his closet he may still feel the classic strength of his *first lines*, yet perhaps at the bed-side he finds himself bewildered ; he then begins to think that experience must be a good thing, he staggers from his first principles and becomes indecisive ; what is the consequence ? his patient quick to perceive the least vacillation in him loses confidence, dismisses him at once, or prevails on him to adopt some favourite remedy, which some favourite friend has pointed in glowing terms. The Physician at last consents, the Medicine succeeds, the patient is restored, his friends tell the tale, the Physician gets some credit, the Medicine much more, its praises are resounded far and near, and the Physician becomes half

a quack already. If he is sufficiently bold and honest on the other hand to resist such allurements, and to tread in the path of his principles, perhaps he loses his patient, perhaps his reputation, there being generally enough of good-natured folks behind to find fault. Let us put another case : he begs to call in the aid of another practitioner when he finds matters becoming worse ; they differ in opinion from some slight source ; the case becomes worse, they beg to call in a third, *a man of observation and experience* ; the patient recovers, his friends give all the credit to the last Physician, they see that experience beats out books and schools, and they are ready to give it their sole confidence.

Let us even take a superior order of the new school, let us admit that a considerable portion of them have not only gone through the terms and conditions prescribed by their

colleges, but are possessed of other high qualifications and talents. It may be asked, ought not such to form a powerful host against increasing incursions of ignorance and quackery? Ought not such a mass of learning, and Latin, and letters, to be a guarantee for the purity of the profession? it might be so if professors and practitioners were more independent; it might be so in other sciences, besides that of Medicine. When this mass is confined to a certain number and within certain limits, it becomes a powerful at least a respectable force from concentration, and public homage is paid to it accordingly; but if the barriers be once broken, and it becomes divided into so many streams, they soon become adulterated, learning loses its lustre, science loses its charms, the powers it possessed become either frittered away from neglect, or what is worse (and much more frequent at present with us) lent from motives of necessity to the support of some

criminal folly or fashion ; these fashions thus sanctioned with classical authority on the one hand, while supported by prejudice and private views on the other, are sure to pass current in their own circle, and even to gain importance, and nothing but the stream of time can wash them away.

But if this Medical scepticism on the part of the public is to abound when so many regular practitioners abound, how is it to increase when the irregulars are so increased? It would be a sorry and tedious task to explore the ways and means of those who live by Medical imposture, or the shapes that Medical avarice assumes with us. It would be equally tedious to enter into the evils which the public, whether in their morals or maladies, suffer from what may be termed *lettered ignorance*. No where does it abound more than with us, no where does it more fatten, no where does it more injury

than in our profession. Although our Medical do not as yet appear so numerous and distinct as some of our other sectarians, yet in the latter the tribunal, as before-mentioned, is so situated that the great and good cause is never long injured. The pulpit may be for a moment degraded by the preacher, but the preacher is always adorned by the pulpit ; the great doctrines of Christianity are fixed and firm, and regular Atheists are only to be found among regular fools or quack philosophers. The bar may be disgraced by the lawyer, but the lawyer is always adorned at the bar. The bench may be degraded by the judge, but this judge while sitting on it thinks himself sacred. In Medicine however we have neither pulpit, bar, nor bench ; our tribunal is not so high, our faculty not so firm ; the chair of the professor or the president is not only lower but more moveable. We are therefore less bound down in one common code ; and even doctrines which

have the highest authority of the schools to recommend them, often become mere matters of opinion.

In proportion to the irregular diffusion of this dangerous article of lettered ignorance among the ranks of society will be this diversity of opinion ; and in proportion to this diversity of opinion will of course be the difficulty of detecting ignorance and imposture, and of estimating real talent and education. On the broad high road of general knowledge, a collision of sentiments and opinions will always by the elicitation of truths add to the public benefit, as the present era of British mind abundantly testifies ; but in a particular art wherein the lives and health of the community are so concerned, and where these truths lie often so deep and so doubtful, we can easily conceive the amount of its injury. When bits and scraps of Greek and Latin, of mongrel science and

half-bread literature (which the quack carries about him as the pedlar carries his wares) are thus thrown into the main mass of society, smatterers and talkers whose only diploma is a knowledge of such scraps, are often those who flourish most; the cant of criticism becomes the order of the day; talents and education are too heavy to float in such a mass; they sink and are forgotten. Add to all this the auxiliaries which mere avarice and knowledge of mankind brings into the field, and we shall see how the interests of humanity are sported with, and how difficult it is to draw the line between *medical fame* and *medical infamy*.

Hitherto we have only looked generally at the state of our science with reference to public estimation, we have only taken it in a mass, and considered those changes by which our profession has become so materially affected: let us now however narrow this in-

quiry, let us look at the *branches* of the profession itself; and here we shall find as much room for regret and reformation, and a source perhaps no less abundant of the degradation into which we have fallen. Between the physician, the surgeon, the apothecary, the surgeon-apothecary, the accoucheur, &c. &c. there seems now established a more puzzling and discordant medley than ever; the lines and limits between them seem almost as loose and broken as between the gradations of qualification to which we have hitherto alluded. Perpetual schism and warfare has been the consequence, but in these wars we cannot attempt to engage; our only object being to speak of the profession *in general*, and to point out how little it has been true to itself, and how loosely the charters of its several bodies have been and are maintained. Many a battle has been fought, many a treaty has been signed, all have failed, and we are now worse than ever

as to *definitions* and *distinctions*. The surgeon says, that the surgeon-apothecary and accoucheur are always treading on his province, and that *high operation* is the only line of demarcation left for him. The apothecary says that he is intruded on both by the surgeon and the surgeon-apothecary. The surgeon-apothecary wisely mixing the commercial and classical parts of his vocation, endeavours to unite and reconcile all parts and parties, and then becomes the mixed practitioner. Physic, surgery, obstetrics, bleeding, tooth-drawing, and corn-cutting all come in his way, and he seldom complains of interference. The physician says he is nibbled at by all, while he can nibble at none; his rank is his only comfort, as perhaps his garret is his only shelter; from both he looks down with classic contempt on the crowd, and though fortune still frowns on him he feels rich in his degree.

It is only in large cities that there is an exception to this looseness of line dividing the branches of the profession ; and even here, unless in those cities which are the seats of Universities, it is wearing away, and the whole becoming lumped. The surgeon, not content with his diploma, obtains a degree in physic ; the physician, not content with his degree, obtains his diploma in surgery ; ambidexterity is the order of the day, and learning and commerce seem shaking hands with each other at last. All aspire to literary appendages to their names, all become men of letters, and members of colleges ; even the apothecary and surgeon-apothecary, who formerly seldom troubled themselves about literary glory, but wisely preferred profit and pudding, now begin to look at the colleges, finding the doors so loosely thrown open. But added to all this, a class of practitioners altogether new has now started up, and with whom this love of letters seems infinitely stronger than any other,

I mean the Army and Navy-surgeons. If we look into the monthly lists of the service for the last five years, we shall see abundant demonstrations of this literary mania ; and when we consider the immense addition which has been thus made to the Medical mass, we must clearly see what a new era it must mark in the profession.

Among the new candidates for this species of distinction there are some who forsake their old callings altogether, and aspire exclusively to the "summos honores Medicinæ," preferring pride and poverty in their purest state. Of these the Army and Navy-surgeons as above-mentioned form the greatest proportion ; having been already accustomed to one species of glory, they wish to convert it into another, and seldom trouble themselves about large incomes. But even some of the other less chivalrous tribes are now seen forsaking altogether their pills, pestle, and handicraft for the

honours of the schools, finding them so easily obtained, and finding that they so well accord with the spirit of the age. Others, however, more wisely turn to account their new gifts ; not content with licences from their halls, and degrees from colleges, they unite themselves privately with the commercial part of their profession ; and thus armed at all points, can kill or cure according to authority, and are sure of being smiled on by either fame or fortune. The whole thus becomes a mixed concern, science stoops her head to commerce, commerce looks up to science ; the man of letters must make money, for without money he cannot live ; the man of trade must become literary, for we live in a literary age.

But it is the appendage of M.D. that has become the order and decoration of the day, and that has made such extraordinary changes with us ; it seems to hang as fluently on our names as crosses hang on French button-

holes. Indeed it is in the nominal physicians that the great redundancy of the profession now becomes manifest, and it is the above appendage which seems to have chiefly levelled its distinctions and barriers. Previous to this passion for letters, the line separating each branch had at least something clear and definite about it, although even then too much weakened; divisions of the profession then seemed to belong to the divisions of the human body; the physician claimed the interior and the trunk, the surgeon claimed the exterior and the limbs, he would contend that he alone should have the department of mechanical operations, and the diseases (principally those of *inflammation*) which resulted from these. The accoucheur would contend that no one could be so well acquainted with the uterine department, the diseases connected with it, and the general maladies of infants. The apothecary would lay claim to a monopoly of the knowledge of family

constitutions, and the benefits of experience. All this was very well in its way, the arguments of each were plausible, each felt strong in his own province, and soon resented any encroachments. Now however matters seem altered, there seems a general mixture, and M.D. seem to be the cabalistic letters that have charmed and united all parties together both in town and country; all branches of the profession are beginning to feel the influence of these magical letters; dentists are beginning to be bitten, and we may naturally expect that chiropodists and bone-setters will soon follow.

One of the oldest and longest wars that has agitated the medical world in the last half century, has perhaps been that between the physician and apothecary. Indeed the question between them has become almost worn out in discussion. The physician contended that the apothecary gave as much

advice as physic, the apothecary contended he had a right so to do from family experience. The physician presented his degree from his college, the apothecary his licence from his hall. The physician said that the apothecary was solely guided by *empirics*, the apothecary said that the physician was solely guided by *dogmas*. Thus the question has remained for years and never has been permanently settled; the charters of their respective corporations have been completely jumbled, and thus irregularities and perplexities have abounded. How far these perplexities will be increased by the new school of M.D. it is not difficult to guess; it forms a race of middlemen, as it were, filling up the space that existed between the two parties; and when the present class of seniors and patriarchs in the profession drop off, we must naturally expect that this space will scarcely exist at all, and that all will be blended in an indistinct mass.

Although this new school consists principally of army and navy-surgeons, the greater part of whom have seen disease, yet along with these we daily see it sending forward into practice men perfectly inexperienced and raw in all branches, who have as little idea of the practical part of their profession when they leave as when they entered it, whose leading motive perhaps is literary vanity, and who think that a two or three years' lounge at a college is the cheapest and shortest mode of gratifying it. At this new fledged race the old and respectable physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries, will look with any thing but respect; thus schisms and divisions will abound every where; public confidence will grow weaker and weaker, because it will see learning at loggerheads. To be fellows or members of the Royal Colleges of physicians or surgeons of London, Edinburgh, or Dublin, is of course the "sine qua non" of consultation and confidence

with the heads of the profession ; and indeed seems the only barrier of distinction left. This however only has its full force in the larger towns and cities, and is often dispensed with even by eminent practitioners. Besides, it is only with the profession that this distinction has its weight ; the public seldom look to these shades, and less so now-a-days than ever. To be bold, acute, and clever, is with them often a surer passport ; and these are not always found among college properties. Acknowledged medical talent and known industry, will certainly when many years established, always produce reputation to a certain extent ; but we need not repeat that medical talent can only be estimated by medical men, we need not enumerate the ways and means by which this talent is stifled and suppressed, we need not allude to the illiberality of our brethren. The public, I mean the great mass, seldom take into account this species of talent ; they like

what is more showy ; they like to be charmed and dazzled, and of all talents the physician's is the least dazzling ; they look upon success as the sure test of talent ; with them two or three hits counterbalance a dozen failures ; and this may perhaps happen as well to the quack as the regular, constituted as quackery and regularity seem now-a-days. The criterion of real merit being so far removed from their ken, fashion is often their only guide ; it matters not if the practitioner is ever so learned, and regular, and talented, and even experienced, it is not to these they look, it is to his luck and his knack at popularity : they have been duped by pretenders on all sides, learned and unlearned ; they have seen regulars fail and quacks flourish, and with the exception of a few established heads and senators of the profession, whom fame has given a loud stamp to, they know not to whom to give their confidence, seeing such differences of opinion even with the most respectable.

Were degrees and diplomas from colleges, licences from halls, and certificates from hospitals less easily obtained, we need not observe how much this confidence would be improved, how much the public and profession would be benefitted. Although our new age of light has materially changed our systems of belief, yet when the appeal to merit or demerit in a particular art becomes strengthened by being collected into a smaller compass, the people will always give it a share of their confidence. We have already mentioned the original and indirect sources of those changes which confidence has received. We have mentioned what appeared to us the great proximate and immediate source, viz. the redundancy of practitioners in all branches. To cure this evil, advanced as it now is, can only perhaps be effected by time; but to stop it, it is clear that the first step must be that of increasing the tests for qualification. Our increasing taste for

professional life powerfully supports it ; and nothing but independence the most bold, and integrity the most incorruptible on the part of examiners and professors can suppress it. As to public quackery, the legislature alone may do much towards its defeat, but it will always more or less live with us. With private quackery the legislature has no more concern than with private opinion ; but private quackery would be powerfully diminished if the redundancy of practitioners was diminished, and if the profession were true to their science and themselves.

If this public confidence is so sparing when so many ycleped regular degrees and diplomas abound, we may easily conclude what it will be when they see the ways and means by which these testimonials are often obtained. Into these we need not enquire ; they present so large a volume of fraud and folly, that it would require a volume as large

to chastize or correct them ; credulity is attacked by them in all shapes, stages, and forms ; diplomas, licences, certificates of all kinds abound every where ; pedlars, jews, and quacks, all have their testimonials, all traffic in them, and from the corn-cutter up to the president of the faculty, all can shew something. These facts are now become so notorious, that in the least to dwell upon them would afford a discussion as unnecessary as painful, and one foreign to the purport of these pages.

If the public have any faith remaining in the science and profession, where then is it to shelter itself, abused as it is in all quarters ? when they see such a redundancy of regulars and irregulars, when they see the former so often differing with, and the latter so often abusing each other, when they see established and public charlatans performing positive cures, when they see all

ranks so jumbled and mixed together, some disputing the province of others, and others disputing the provinces of all, when they see all classes of the profession armed with testimonials, and yet many exhibiting the most infallible and manifest proofs of ignorance, when they learn the frauds committed in the obtaining of these testimonials; what must they think of the profession? What must they think of the science? There are many who will say that the present is the age of practical credulity, but there are more perhaps who will call it the age of *practical scepticism*, that is, an age in which nothing is thought true and nothing false, an age in which nothing is wondered at and yet wonders are nothing. Were our fabric of society what it was fifty years since, were we to live in the old uninquiring times, we (that is the public) might have strong doubts as to the importance of Medicine, had we seen the hands into which it has fallen; but in the

present advance and hoary age, when science and scepticism seem running races with each other, how is it to rank in our estimation?

We have thus in a most feeble and imperfect manner attempted to point out the changes which have occurred in the character and constitution of the profession, the causes of those changes and the modes of their operation. It is to the altered condition of our circumstances and country that we must look in the first instance for these effects. We must see clearly that in the vast sweep of changes and chances that has shaken us from our old foundations, Medicine has kept moving at even a more rapid rate than its colleague institutions. The change in our character and resources, the over proportion of population, the change of mind and modes of thinking, the boldness, licence, and luxury of speech, press, and language ; all these are quite enough to explain *primary* and *general*

causes, The ancient ravages of public quackery, the present ravages of private quackery, the promotion of both by our speculative character, and the irregularities of our climate and diet, the money-hunting and commercial spirit that has infused itself into all our institutions, the victory which our necessities have obtained over our principles, all these are the *immediate* and *particular* sources we must look to ; and all are so mixed up together, that to draw the line between cause and effect, between the antecedent and consequent, is impossible. Can we wonder then at the signs of our times? can we wonder that a science like Medicine (whose benefits to mankind must ever be in proportion to the skill, intelligence, and humanity with which it is exercised) must fall in its dignity, and that its future destinies may be even darker.

Must we not regret all this, must we not

regret that while this science is making positive and rapid advances to excellence in the hands of some, it is debased and debauched in the hands of others? must we not regret that while talents, learning, and every virtue that can adorn humanity are still to be found in our ranks, and are every day labouring to dissipate the mists and mysteries that have disgraced us, others are but too successfully trying to pull it down from that high seat it ought to hold? must we not regret that a line cannot be drawn between classes so opposite? It is only ourselves (we need not repeat) that can judge of the state of the science: although individuals of the public will often become their own quacks, were the profession ever so pure, yet unless in very strong marked cases they will not or cannot judge of its actual state; this can only be estimated by the profession, as the profession is estimated by the public; and if the profession falls in the eyes of the

public, the science must fall along with it. It matters not that we can count in our numbers some of the most highly-gifted characters of the community, it matters not that our business is to remove the severest pangs that "flesh is heir to," these cannot rescue us if our impurities spread abroad. In times of ignorance and darkness we were venerated and respected, in times of light and liberty we are often a source of contempt and ridicule.

Will Medicine (including both science and profession) ever be restored to that equal and general respectability it once held with us, even in times which may be called modern? Let us look to its history and progress with us. In the early ages of darkness it was in the hands of our monks, priests, and magicians; and when we look to the powers of such men as Bede, Matthew Paris, or Roger Bacon, we cannot wonder

that cures were considered charms, and that the mysteries of the art were rendered so powerful an instrument. From those times to the days of Harvey and Sydenham, it struggled on like a floating light through the fading mists of superstition, borrowing its light from the lights of each age and its character from those by whom it was exercised, and dispensing its blessings in proportion to their intelligence and humanity. As the human mind became more enlarged, its terrors gave way to its hopes, public confidence became greater ; and although it had not collected a sufficient body of principles or data to come under the head of a distinct learned profession, yet through all its stages learning was its companion ; this learning no doubt was often choaked up with the fables and superstitions of the antient churches, yet it had notwithstanding a sacred stamp of authority about it. From the days of Sydenham and Harvey, we need

not proceed with its history or say what its career has been ; it received a basis from those men from which it can never be altogether shaken ; with our increasing lights it has been enlightened, it has received the support of systems and fixed principles, the support of men of the highest talents, learning, and education, and been promoted to the rank of a learned profession ; each branch was more or less distinct in its practice, and public homage was paid to it accordingly. We need not recapitulate the circumstances by which it has been affected in the last twenty and still more in the last ten years. Learning, talents, and education still adorn its ranks ; the principles on which as a body of science it is founded, are every day becoming firmer ; the despotism of names and systems is fading away ; single diseases are acutely studied not only from books but from the bed-side ; the most active spirit of enquiry diffuses itself throughout, and instead of notes and com-

mentaries which always mark a declining era of knowledge, we have now the original results of personal practice and inquiry. The science has been advanced by collateral rather than by direct powers, and therefore the basis is strong; and though here and there a daring and lofty spirit may put out some of our old lights, as in our Chymistry, yet this basis can never be altogether deranged.

Such appears briefly to be the positive state of the science past and present, notwithstanding the struggles it has had to encounter. Its effects though silent and secret are felt and will be felt by the public for a long time to come; but need we over and over again observe, that it is not the public who can appreciate this, that they can only judge of the science by the professors. The rank which it holds with them must depend on the rank of their professors as to acknowledged talents, intelligence, and honesty.

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If this rank falls, the science must fall with it, because the stimulus of its improvement will cease, and *vice versa*; but the rise of the science does not include the rise of the profession, because it is only to the professors and not the public that this rise is known. A clever man, (what we generally know by the term) soon shews himself in his circle; he is soon found out by the public; but a clever physician is only found out by physicians; his rank among his brethren increases, but it is not higher with the public, because they are no judges of medical talents; if however added to his medical talent he possesses a general reputation of honesty and sound intellect, his rank as well in the eyes of the public as the profession will rise, his emulation for his science will be increased, and it will receive from him a steady support and benefit.

It has often been a question whether

medicine would rank higher if practitioners were what may be termed mere *practical men*, or literary and *philosophical men*. We must here again distinguish not only between the two portions of the science to which we have before alluded, but between the science and the profession. In the former it is evident that pure practical men will most advance its single interests, because a great portion of its essence is made up of that species of knowledge which belongs in a great measure to the rules of mere art and experience, and is not dependant on speculation or any high wrought mental machinery. In the other portion however of the science, a mere practical man often becomes a mere empiric, he practises by note and not by reasoning, he excludes all theory and therefore all thinking, and thus he hurts the general cause of the science. As to the cause of the profession, that is, as to the rank which its members hold in public estimation, it would

appear that what may be called the *philosophical practitioner* has the best chance of serving it, and we must regret that this race is fast diminishing. His lights not being *exclusively* confined to one branch, are seen by the public ; they can judge of the man in general ; they pay homage to his general talents ; they cannot judge of his medical talents, but they think both must be equally bright. Thus the profession is elevated in public opinion, and the science also, because the zeal of professors is increased ; and we need not mention the names of a Darwin, a Percival, or a Gregory to shew that those who have shed the most permanent lustre on Medicine have equally shone in other departments of science and literature. While the profession is kept more or less pure, the dicta of a physician to his patient will be heard with more or less faith and confidence, but if this patient has the least suspicion of the purity of his adviser, he will begin to reason

and discuss the matter, and perhaps conclude by rejecting him. The physician, perhaps a perfectly regular, honourable and even talented man, although neither a philosopher nor man of letters, seeing he has lost confidence, and that his labours and anxieties go for nothing, either commences to feel a disgust for his profession, lends himself to the whims of his patient, or at last degenerates into a very pleasant gossip. This perhaps is an every-day event in these times ; and thus it is that so many men are obliged to forsake their study of medicine for that of men and manners, to forsake their closet for the drawing-room and tea-table.

It is to these sources that we should chiefly look in estimating the future prospects of the science and the profession ; it is to the latter we must look, together with the future lights of the times and the changes in the state of our knowledge. The operation

of the chief causes to which we have alluded, viz. the *redundancy of practitioners* and the *increase of private quackery* are too recent to affect altogether the frame of the whole; we have still too proud a list of high names to strengthen and adorn it, (although the authority of high names is falling) but when these front ranks drop off what will result?

We have spoken of the improvements which our science has latterly received, and the probable permanence of their advantages to mankind; but we must also speak of those circumstances which arising *from its own nature* have operated so powerfully against it, and which will always more or less embarrass its course. We have already alluded to, and shall now merely touch on them. The chief of these circumstances is the rapidity of the changes it has undergone in the modes of studying and practising it. New theories, new fashions, new eras, have been

given to it so quickly and so abundantly, as was before observed, that its form and frame seem to have been always moving. To go into those changes would be going into a strange history of visions and perplexities. Perhaps the chief source of these has arisen from the wars and errors of systems and names, and the slavery they have created. Although the classification of disease materially assists the indolence of the teacher, and the bad memory of the learner in his first lines, yet it often materially confounds the commencing practitioner. When called to the bed-side of his patient and having asked a few general questions, he makes a guess in his own mind as to the nature of the disease, he thinks it belongs to such a *class* and such an *order*, and gives it a name; he then asks other questions, keeping strictly in mind the *name* which he thinks belongs to it, and directing his questions solely in this course: unless he gets direct negatives to them he becomes

persuaded that such is its proper name, he treats it accordingly and probably fails. *Names* to him are of the first consequence, because in his school he perhaps has learned little more. He soon finds however that single diseases seldom occur, that names are not of much practical use, and that symptomatizing is of much greater importance than idiopathic practice, because the number of what we may call sound *specifics* is so few. There are of course diseases whose character is so distinctly marked, that even in the first glance we may almost give them a name and a treatment. But how much more commonly do we find dark and obscure mixtures of two or three of different characters and complexions, where the nicest tact is necessary, and where the true and real nature of the predominant disease does not develop itself for several days. *Symptoms* then he finds it necessary to pay his first attention to, these are the branches of the tree, they

are the only parts that shew themselves, the trunk is hidden, and thus he is obliged to forget his nosology. Another proof of the injury of names and a too close adherence to them, is the similarity of treatment in differently named diseases. The whole class of phlegmasiæ we know requires the same modes, though diversified, of treatment; and although diagnosis must be allowed the Physician's finest and rarest talent, yet we know it is only in the minuter shades and mixtures where treatment must decidedly differ, that its value becomes so prominent. Another circumstance that has retarded the science, is the rapid fluctuations it has undergone between dogmatic and empiric practice, as before-mentioned, between exclusive theorists and exclusive men of experience; and never perhaps have they appeared more striking than at present. The patriarchs of the old school cannot, or will not, bend themselves to the fashions or follies of the day; their

routine is laid down, and they have neither time nor inclination to study new theories or read new books. The elites of the new school seem determined to prefer the latter, because we live in a bold age of thinking, and perhaps shall be by and by deluged with chimeras wilder than ever deformed the page of Medicine. It is from those holding the middle rank that we must look for improvements; they will draw a just line of demarcation between; they will try and preserve our new and solid lights without the expense of our old and solid principles. What is the mere practice of our art too often but a dry beaten and worn-out path? How often do we act on empiric principles, although our tongue decorates them with dogmas? How rarely do we reason on the minute "modus operandi" of our drugs? Must we not admit that Medicine has been too much studied as an art not as a science, and perhaps more as a trade than either.

Narrow-minded, mercenary, plodding, dull fools, and knaves have been too often the hands into which it has fallen. What can be more beautiful and grand than the philosophy of our science? What can be finer than a knowledge of the elements and structure of our system, and the harmony with which we are constituted? What can be more beautiful than physiology? how few of us are physiologists? how often is it laughed at? must we say it requires too fanciful a fabric of mind for us? is it not from our neighbours we have borrowed its finest lights? and yet what branch, if properly and carefully applied to the principles of our art, can more add to its certainties, and thus add to the relief of our sufferings. But does not physiology go higher, does it not reach from the physical to the moral man? does it not, while filling us with boundless admiration at the structure which the Almighty has given us, fill us also with his power and

glory? but no, we are become sceptical and scientific at the same time, and physiology has been made the instrument of our infidelity.

What is our catalogue of cures? We boast of new ones every day; and if we look into our old books we find many of them. We are laden down with cases, and records, and reports, and commentaries, and we are sometimes tempted to think there is nothing new to learn; and yet some of the simplest diseases baffle us every day. In simple truth the number of our real diseases is small, and so is the number of our good Medicines. Writers and system-mongers have exaggerated both, and thus embarrassed both the science and the practitioner. Next to the profusion of medical works that now issue from the press, and with which our libraries are crowded, what can puzzle the commencing practitioner more than the profusion of our

Materia Medica, and if he does not confine himself to a certain portion of it, how can he proceed? Simplicity would seem to be avoided, crooked and complicated views too often held, nothing but cases and practice too often mentioned, old dry details of worn-out cures too often dressed up into new fashions. Nothing but these go down with some even of those considered the most eminent of the profession, theory laughed at, physiology thought a dream, and experience looked up to as the only authority.

These are only a few of the embarrassments which Medicine has had to contend with: they have partly arisen from the nature of the science and partly from the professors; and we may easily conceive their increase from the present aspect of the times, and from the circumstances we have alluded to. In a profession embracing so wide and vast a range of the community and so diversified

a field of talent, we of course meet with the most decided exceptions to what we have mentioned, but alas, they are too few to resist the torrent; and unless the professional bond of union becomes firmer than what it now is, unless the schools are stricter, and the societies stronger and more numerous, unless their members are true to themselves and the science, both will lose the only support they have in the confidence of the public, and the healths and lives of the community will be at the mercy of the ignorant and the impostor.

We have still a race of physicians of the first order, let us look to their light and take it for our guide: we have still our medical philosophers, and let us cherish the race. The days of a Darwin, a Percival, and now of a Gregory are gone, but we have still our stars: let us hope their line of light may direct the wandering, let us hope

their examples may serve for guides, and afford some barriers to avert what we fear : let us hope that while our science is daily strengthening by fresh facts, our profession may not poison it with fresh frauds or follies : let us strengthen the judgment-seat to which we can refer, as far as lies in our own power by confidence and co-operation, and by laying aside divisions and jealousies and distrusting. Legislative protection will soon follow, the charters of colleges and corporations will be rendered more strong and distinct, each branch of the profession will be better guarded and watched, the inroads of ignorance will soon be detected, and quackery will no longer rear its hydra-head over the land.

What are we in the eyes of the people, unless we can prove to them that our science is founded on some fixed principles ? which of them can judge of medical talent or

medical trick? At the bar, eloquence will always speak for itself; it lays hold of the passions, and soon lays hold of the public; there can be no oratory without passion, and when both are united, popularity soon follow. A brilliant speech makes a character in a day, and the speaker's name becomes established at once. In the pulpit and bench, learning or ignorance soon show themselves; and although the passions are less frequently addressed, yet we can always judge for ourselves, and are nearly as quick in making up our minds on the matter.

How different is the course of the Physician? silent, secret, and laborious, none can judge of his talents but his colleagues. Hidden from the public eye he works on his path without display, perhaps unnoticed and unknown. The wheel of his fortune or fame knows no jerks unless from *small miracles* or *large mistakes*. Talent, labour,

and industry are perhaps its constant spokes, and even with these he often stands still. With the public, practice is generally taken for talent; success they think must follow practice; and it requires strong proofs to dissipate the error. Talent pines without practice, unless perhaps it lends itself to what is unworthy; and be it ever so manifest it can only be appreciated by those who may conceal it. Where then are the consolations of the honest enlightened physician, unless in his own breast? what task can be harder than his reputation? where is bearing and forbearing more necessary? time and truth may aid him at last, they may come like a clear running stream where there is no mud or weeds to be seen at the bottom, they may rub away the film which prejudice has created, they may break away the chain which it has hung around, our vision may become purified, our mind emancipated, and we may see the man in his true light at

last. But when is all this to take place? not perhaps till his years become weary and worn; not until depressed, dispirited, and disgusted, he has born the frowns and the scorn of fate, not until he has been the play-thing of her tricks and caprices. Who then has such a right to learn philosophy? who is so much benefitted by it? Where is the profession in which from his entrance to his exit he meets with more discomfitures and trials. But let him not be the cold marble statue that philosophy has too often appeared to us: to a head clear and acute he should add a heart warm and loving of man; to a mind enlarged and enlightened he should add the manner that *moral* not *mechanical* benevolence inspires; to the learning and patience of the sage he should add the simplicity of the stoic; cunning should not sharpen, intrigue should not divert him, and his paths should be those of the honest and the free.

Imperfect as our nature [is, and more imperfect as we ourselves have made it: men like these are still to be found, men like these still adorn our profession, let us cherish and strengthen the race; it is on such that our hopes as to its future fate must arise, it is by such that it may still be restored to its eminence; and notwithstanding the moving times in which we live, notwithstanding the strange lights that [are daily pouring in upon us, whether false or true, notwithstanding the wrecks we have seen scattered around, we will look safely up to them as to beacons in a storm, and feel proud in the pilots that have guided us through its perils. In fine, and dropping all figures, let the profession be honest to itself and honourable in the exercise of its functions, “ then, but not till “ then, can it demand from the legislature a “ test that shall prove character and qualification in every one applying to be admitted “ into its ranks; then, but not till then, will

“ it be found that the philosopher and the
“ wit, the sage and the savage will alike
“ reverence a body of men whose business
“ is to relieve the greatest sufferings of hu-
“ manity.”
