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MARK AKENSIDE*

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For the readers of *The Gentleman's Magazine* its editor, "Sylvanus Urban, Gent," had prepared a varied bill of fare in the April number of 1737. Among the literary attractions were a tale from the Arabian Nights, an article recording "Observations upon the effects of Tea," a scheme for the benefit of the Counties, "by keeping the gentry there for 14 years and no parliament during that time," and a short note on "Why handsome women often marry ordinary men." There were also discussions on legislative projects—one, cautionary, against the placing of a new duty on sweets; another, speculative, suggesting that there should be an Act of Parliament to prohibit the drinking of any liquor made by fermentation or infusion.

In the closely printed poetical section of the magazine (p. 244) the reader would have found an ingenuous preface to some verses entitled "The Virtuoso; in imitation of Spenser's style and stanza." It read as follows:

"Newcastle upon Tyne. April 23rd. I hope, Sir, you'll excuse the following poem (being the performance of one in his sixteenth year) and insert it in your next magazine, which will oblige, Yours, etc., Marcus."

Of the verses themselves two stanzas perhaps will serve to show the mastery of the Spenserian metre and the pert imagination of the youthful poet:

"Whilom by silver Thames's gentle stream,
In London town there dwelt a subtle wight;
A wight of mickle wealth, and mickle fame,
Book-learn'd and quaint; a Virtuoso hight.
Uncommon things, and rare, were his delight:
From musings deep his brain ne'er gotten ease,
Nor ceasen he from study, day or night;
Until (advancing outward by degrees)
He knew whatever breeds on earth, or air, or seas.

"He many a creature did anatomize,
Almost unpeopling water, air, and land;
Beasts, fishes, birds, snails, caterpillars, flies,
Were laid full low by his relentless hand,
That oft with gory crimson was distain'd:
He many a dog destroy'd, and many a cat;
Of fleas his bed, of frogs the marshes drain'd,
Could tellen if a mite were lean or fat,
And read a lecture o'er the entrails of a gnat."

Within three months there appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine* two other pieces, "Ambition and Con-

tent; a fable" in heroic couplets (p. 309), and "The Poet. A rhapsody" in blank verse (p. 441). Both appeared under the *nom de plume* of "Marcus." Thereafter for a period of twelve months there was a silence, noisily broken in the August number of 1738 (p. 428) by "A British Philippic: occasioned by the insults of the Spaniards, and the present preparations for war." It was signed not "Marcus" but "Britannicus." This change of *nom de plume* prompted an editorial note:

"It often turning to our inconvenience, to sell a greater number of one magazine than of another, and believing the above noble-spirited Poem will be acceptable to many, not our constant readers, we have printed it in folio, price six pence. . . . And if the ingenious author will inform us how we may direct a packet to his hands, we will send him our acknowledgements for so great a favour, with a parcel of the folio edition."

Akenside's Early Days

The ingenious and versatile author of all these pieces was in fact Mark Akenside, second son of a Newcastle butcher of the same name and his wife, born Mary Lumsden. Both parents were Northumbrian Presbyterians of the lower middle class, and the father was the owner of a prosperous butchering establishment on Butcher Bank overlooking the Side and the River Tyne. Here Mark Akenside was born on November 9, 1721, and thence taken to be baptized by the Reverend Benjamin Bennet at the Close Gate Mission House on November 30. Tradition relates that when Marcus was 7 one of his father's cleavers fell on his foot, and "halted him for life." That the injury was severe and the orthopaedic result unsatisfactory can be gathered from Lettsom's statement many years later: "One leg of Dr. Akenside was considerable shorter than the other, which was in some measure remedied by the aid of a false heel." (Abraham, 1933.)

It is strange that for a writer who within three months of his twenty-second birthday had become almost a national figure in the world of poetry so little can be set down to give a consecutive account of his early education. It is known that he was a pupil at the Newcastle Grammar School, but that subsequently he attended the private academy of a dissenting minister, Mr. William Wilson. It is also surmised that he returned later to the Newcastle Grammar School, where he would have benefited from the educational direction of one of the school's great headmasters, Mr. Dawes, but there is no precise record to this effect. What is clear from the

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internal evidence of *The Gentleman's Magazine* is that in his early teens Mark Akenside was already possessed of much more than the Shakespearian measure of "small latin and less greek," and was widely read in the mythologies and in the English poets.

With such gifts it is not surprising that his parents and friends destined him for the Ministry, and, the requisite money being provided by the Dissenters' Society, dispatched him to Edinburgh in the autumn of 1739, shortly before his eighteenth birthday. One winter at divinity and theology seems to have satisfied the young Akenside that his call lay in other directions.

Some time in 1740 he published privately a little sheaf of poems, including "An Ode on the Winter-Solstice," and "Love, an Elegy." The latter, written before his nineteenth birthday, laments:

"Too much my heart of Beauty's power hath known,
Too long to Love hath reason left her throne;
Too long my genius mourn'd his myrtle chain,
And three rich years of youth consum'd in vain."

It ends on a more sanguine note:

"I break triumphant through thy flimsy toils;
I see thy dying lamp's last languid glow,
.....

Resume the paths my earliest choice began,
And lose, with pride, the lover in the man."

Student in Medicine

Having renounced both theology and love, Akenside became a medical student, and on December 30, 1740, was elected a member of the recently formed student society, the now famous and historical Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh. The debates of the Society, which were catholic in their range, gave Akenside an opportunity to display his gifts of eloquence and his knowledge of literature. He seems also to have developed some political ideas, and the impression made upon his contemporaries, one of whom, Dr. Robertson, became an eminent divine, was that Parliament was the goal of his ambitions. Among those contemporaries was Jeremiah Dyson, with whom Akenside struck up a friendship which lasted throughout his life. Dyson has been described as "by birth a tailor, by education a dissenter, and from interest or vanity in his earlier years a republican." He became ultimately a crusted Tory, and the *éminence grise* of the North Ministry. His inherited wealth enabled him in due time to be Akenside's Maecenas.

Despite all these distractions Akenside appears in about eighteen months to have picked up a sufficient knowledge of medicine to make him a competent practitioner, although he left Edinburgh without taking any degree. His mind at that time has been described as showing "equal readiness in science as in literature."

Returning to Newcastle at the end of 1741 or early in 1742, he began to call himself a surgeon and to seek for practice. Whether he did so from the somewhat inappropriate address on Butcher Bank or with what success we do not know. But the money borrowed from the Dissenters' Society towards his education for the Ministry was repaid then or later.

There is a tradition that he spent much time with a relative at Morpeth; and, seeking the inspiration "of solitary Wensbeck's limpid stream," composed "The Pleasures of Imagination," that meditative essay in three books upon which his reputation as a poet mainly rests.

"The Pleasures of Imagination" duly completed would appear to have been sent to Dodsley, the London publisher, towards the end of 1743—about the time of Akenside's twenty-second birthday. Dodsley referred it to Alexander Pope, for the price asked by Akenside—namely, £120—seemed a substantial one. Pope's reply has become classical. "Make no niggardly offer since this is no every day writer."

Dodsley accepted the advice, and "The Pleasures" duly appeared anonymously in a large quarto edition on January 17, 1744. There exists in manuscript a dedication of this volume to Jeremiah Dyson—"Dat, Dicat, consecratque. Marcus Akenside."

The poem had an immediate success, and a cheap edition appeared four months later making known the author's name.

At Leyden University

Armed now with sufficient cash for his immediate purposes, Akenside left the "dales of Tyne" and the "Northumbrian shades" for London. His stay there, however, was only preparatory to his descent upon Holland and the University of Leyden early in April, 1744. There he joined Jeremiah Dyson and other friends of his Edinburgh days, and, having been enrolled a member of the University, set about the business of acquiring a Doctorate of Medicine. That he should have been able to do this in approximately six weeks—for his degree was awarded on May 16, 1744—hardly accords with our modern ideas about these matters. But the pattern of performance would appear to have been standardized. Lettsom, who took such a Leyden M.D. nearly 20 years later, spent even less time about it. A thesis had to be submitted in Latin, and sustained before the examiners in the same language. Akenside, the acclaimed poet of "The Pleasures of Imagination," wrote a dissertation on "The origin and growth of the human foetus," which roused some interest because it challenged some of the views of the great Antony van Leeuwenhoek. But, the task accomplished and the doctorate acquired, Akenside and Dyson embarked at Rotterdam on the relatively slow voyage to London. The occasion prompted the composition of an ode, "On Leaving Holland":

"Farewell to Leyden's lonely bound,
The Belgian Muse's sober seat;
Where dealing frugal gifts around
To all the favourites at her feet,
She trains the body's bulky frame
For passive, persevering toils;
And lest from any prouder aim,
The daring mind should scorn her homely spoils,
She breathes maternal fogs to damp its restless flame."

Entry into Practice

Within a few weeks of his return to England, Akenside began to practise in Northampton. It was not a successful venture, as Dr. Stonehouse, being then in the full flood of his activities, left little scope for his 23-year-old competitor. whatever the latter's reputation as a poet. And in fact Akenside had sufficient time on his hands to write not only one of his most powerful satiric efforts, "An Epistle to Curio," but to prepare for publication in March, 1745, his first book of "Odes on Several Subjects." There are records, too, of amiable debates with medical and literary colleagues on such subjects as "The opinions of the ancient philosophers with regard to a future state of rewards and punishments."

From these erudite musings in somewhat bucolic surroundings Akenside was rescued by Jeremiah Dyson. The latter transported him about Christmas, 1745, to a house at North End, whence he could practise amongst the opulent inhabitants of Hampstead and frequent the celebrated "Long Room" at the Spa, and all the clubs and assemblies. In addition Akenside found for himself in January, 1746, a post as editor of Dodsley's magazine, *The Museum*, and contributed extensively to its pages. After two years at North End it became clear that for one reason or another professional success was eluding Akenside, and Dyson again came to the rescue. On this occasion he placed his friend in possession of a small but convenient house in Bloomsbury and made him an allowance of £300 per annum. From that moment Akenside was established. His sources of poetical inspirations may have become less productive, but he set himself assiduously to enhance his professional standing and

at the same time to engage in the social life of the literary and scientific groups which clustered around the Royal Society.

Admission to Royal College of Physicians and Royal Society

It is easy to follow the progress of Akenside in the hierarchical structure of the Royal College of Physicians. He was successively licentiate, candidate, and Fellow, being admitted to the first degree in June, 1751, and to the Fellowship in 1753. In between he had applied to be admitted by mandamus to the degree of Doctor of Physic in the University of Cambridge and had been accepted. He was twice a censor at the College, in 1755 and 1760, and carried out with his three colleagues their assigned tasks, of examining candidates for the licentiate and of inspecting the shops and drugs of the apothecaries. Furthermore, he was called upon to deliver two of the series of lectures in the College gift, the Goulstonian and the Croonian, and on October 18, 1759, "made," as the annals record it, the Harveian Oration. He was diligent in his attendance at the quarterly comitia, and discharged his various duties with satisfaction and those requiring the literary graces with every possible distinction. Of these various addresses and of his contributions to the *Medical Transactions* of the College I shall have more to say. For his association with the College of Physicians Akenside relied almost entirely on his own activities, but for his introduction to the circles of the Royal Society he was again indebted to Jeremiah Dyson.

Samuel Johnson has said that "there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn." Dinner at "The Mitre," summer and winter alike, was the custom of that curious adjunct to the Royal Society "The Royal Society Club," commonly known as "The Royal Philosophers," or more briefly "The Royals." Membership, though small and select, was not limited to Fellows of the Society. Akenside first appeared there, probably introduced by Dyson, on July 20, 1749. Though a guest he would have had the privilege of paying for his own dinner. But a guest had to be invited, and his acceptability was determined by some of the brightest minds of the epoch. It is very evident that Akenside had all the gifts that suited best this genial and familiar form of intercourse. Hardinge (1814) has commented on his "eloquent reasoning, historical knowledge, and philosophical taste, enlivened by the happiest and most brilliant illusions"—all of which would commend him in that circle. At any rate, he was so popular as a companion at these weekly dinners that between April, 1751, and July, 1752, a period of 16 months, he was an invited guest on no fewer than 33 occasions. On July 30, 1752, he became a full member of the club. On February 8, 1754, at the age of 32, he was elected into the Fellowship of the Royal Society itself.

Society and Court Physician

In the field of medical practice and hospital appointments Akenside's success was not quite so rapid. He resided at the house in Bloomsbury Square, and no doubt practised amongst the elegant society of that neighbourhood, having behind him the comfortable competence of £300 per annum provided by Jeremiah Dyson's munificence. Not till January, 1759, did he obtain any hospital appointment, and then about the same time he became assistant physician to both Christ's Hospital and St. Thomas's Hospital. Within three months of his joining the latter hospital he became, in March, 1759, a full physician, and so remained until his death in 1770 (Parsons, 1934).

Early in 1759 he moved from Bloomsbury to a house in Craven Street, just off the Strand, where on the evening of January 22, 1761, he had the privilege of entertaining Joshua Reynolds. Craven Street was also near to the Charing Cross Coffee Houses—and in particular "Toms," which Akenside is known to have frequented.

In 1760 Akenside, together with Dyson, had transferred his political allegiance from the Whigs to the Tories. Dyson

in due time became a Privy Councillor, the friend and confidant of Lord North, and Cofferer to the Royal Household.

Akenside in 1761 became one of the three physicians to the Queen. It was in this year also that he received from Thomas Hollis, a republican, the gift of Milton's bed. Here is the dedicatory letter:

"An English Gentleman is desirous of having the honour to present a bed which once belonged to John Milton, and on which he died, and if Dr. Akenside believing himself obliged, and having slept on that bed, should prompt him to write an ode to the memory of John Milton and the asserter of British liberty, that gentleman would think himself abundantly recompensed."

There is no record that Akenside ever wrote the ode so commissioned, but references to Milton are scattered throughout his writings.

In 1762 Akenside moved again to Old Burlington Street—which was tending to become the Harley Street of the period and was already the centre from which some of his colleagues of the Royal College of Physicians were conducting their practices. From 1762 onwards Akenside's life seems to have followed a set and orderly pattern—a modicum of private practice, attendance at his hospitals, periodical duties as Court Physician, appearances at the comitia of the College of Physicians and the meetings of the Royal Society, the round of the coffee houses, dinners with "The Royal Philosophers," and a revision of some of his poetry. These made up his day, his week, his year. There is no record of foreign travel, or even of any return to his birthplace and his youthful haunts, though from time to time he spent a few days in the country near London with the Dysons or other landed friends. It can be assumed from the fact that he continued in his hospital appointments that his private practice, though agreeable, was not extensive. He never married.

In December, 1767, he made his will, leaving his "whole estate and effects of whatever kind" to Jeremiah Dyson. All too early the terms of that will came to be implemented. The even course of life was interrupted and terminated. In June, 1770, Akenside fell ill of a "putrid sore throat," or, according to others, of a "putrid fever." He died on Saturday, June 23, in the bed of Milton, and was buried five days later in his parish church of St. James's, Piccadilly.

Such are the simple facts of the life of Mark Akenside, so far as they can be gathered from the exiguous material available. It remains to attempt an assessment of his achievements as a poet, of his accomplishments as a physician and medical writer, and of his merits as a man.

The Poet

His poetical works comprise the two versions of "The Pleasures of Imagination"—altogether some 4,000 lines of blank verse, 33 odes in two books, the "Hymn to the Naiads," and a sheaf of shorter poems and inscriptions, including the *Juvenilia* of *The Gentleman's Magazine*. With the exception of the two or three magnificently satiric pieces they make austere and Augustan reading.

Samuel Johnson, who regarded the heroic couplet as the ultimate perfection of prosody, had little respect for Akenside either as the writer of blank verse or as the composer of odes. Of "The Pleasures of Imagination" he said, "I found it mighty dull, and as for the style—it was fit for the second table." As to the odes, he concluded, "One bad ode may be suffered, but a number of them makes one sick." But he really touched the heart of the matter when he said that Akenside's thoughts were cold. And that seems to be the general opinion—a recognition of the icy elegance, coupled with the feeling that here was a poet very near to genius but lacking the essential fire and warmth.

Edmund Gosse describes Akenside as "a sort of frozen Keats"—a somewhat inept comparison, for, despite the fact that they both followed the medical way, they had little in common. The academic perfection of Akenside is a pale thing beside the sensuous, evocative magic of Keats. Yet

the Akenside who could commence an "Ode to the Evening Star" with the lines:

"To-night retir'd the queen of heaven
With young Endymion stays."

was in Pope's phrase "no every day writer."

George Saintsbury (1908) has written about him more sympathetically than most. Akenside had always been to him a greater puzzle than almost any other English poet. "There is so much to admire in him and so little to enjoy." And he hints that the last years of Akenside's life—while he was chiselling and rechiselling "The Pleasures of the Imagination"—showed promise of a second spring. "The second version," says Saintsbury, "is far better verse—less stiff . . . than the first—and perhaps his very best work in the metre is to be found in the opening fragment of a fourth book which is dated as late as 1770. Here . . . we are very nearly in presence of Wordsworth."

The Doctor

Akenside the doctor lived under the shadow of Akenside the poet. And yet he was no amateur apothecary, but an active, competent, and experienced physician. That experience came to him not so much from private practice as from his assiduous attendance at St. Thomas's Hospital—every Tuesday morning to see his medical patients, every third Thursday to receive the new admissions, every Saturday to join with his fellow physicians and surgeons in the grand consultations enjoined by the hospital statutes.

Even Lettsom, who had no great respect for him as a man, was constrained to say after walking the wards at St. Thomas's: "Akenside, however, would sometimes condescend to explain a case of disease to the pupils which always appeared sagacious; and in spite of his irritable temper he was more followed than Russell" (Abraham, 1933).

From his medical writings, not too numerous but adequate for the purpose, it is possible to make a fair and reasonable assessment of his ability and condition. They comprise in temporal order, the Leyden M.D. dissertation "De ortu et incremento foetus humani" (1744); the Goulstonian Lectures entitled "Opinions on the Lymphatic Vessels" (1755), which were again expounded to the Royal Society two years later (1757); the Harveian Oration of 1759; "An account of a blow upon the heart and its effects," which was reported to the Royal Society on December 22, 1763; the massive "De Dysenteria Commentarius" (1764); and finally the three papers, "Observations on cancers," "Of the use of ipecacuanha in asthma," and "A method of treating white-swelling of the joints," which appeared in the first volume of the *Medical Transactions* of the College of Physicians, published in 1768. Another paper, "On the putrid Erysipelas," though read before the College shortly before his death, was never completed for publication.

A few general observations will suffice. All the writings before 1759, when he became Physician to St. Thomas's, are, broadly speaking, academic in origin and approach. But both his thesis on "The origin and growth of the human foetus" and the Goulstonian Lectures on "The Lymphatics," as given in synoptic form before the Royal Society, contain original and imaginative speculation and argument. Akenside has in fact a considerable claim to be regarded as the first man to describe clearly and correctly the functions of the lymphatics.

The writings after 1759 are all clinical, and with the exception of the "De Dysenteria Commentarius" are written in clear, lucid English prose. As to content, they present the findings of a keen observer and the logical conclusions of a physician able to call to his aid a good memory and extensive experience, albeit restricted by the limited pathology of the period. They are written in terms of the admirable prescription which serves as introduction to that memorable first volume of the *Medical Transactions*:

"The experience of many ages hath more than sufficiently shewn, that mere abstract reasonings have tended very little to

the promoting of natural knowledge. By laying these aside, and attending carefully to what nature hath either by chance or upon experiment offered to our observation, a greater progress hath been made in this part of Philosophy, since the beginning of the last Century, than had been till that time from the days of Aristotle."

As an example of Akenside's narrative style, his observation, and his quick diagnosis and treatment one cannot do better than present the introductory paragraphs of the contribution on cancers.

"In the summer of the year 1761, a man of about threescore years of age came to St. Thomas's hospital from a village at some distance; not with any intention of being admitted as a patient, but in order to obtain present assistance for an uncommon disorder. He was in general healthy, and apparently of a good habit of body; but had been accustomed, during the greater part of his life, to a constant succession of wens, that shot out in several places; on his head, trunk, arms, and legs; which indisposition he inherited from his father. As often as these wens became inconvenient from their size, his method was to cut them off with a razor; at which times he constantly found that they grew upon the part by five or six suckers, as he called them. He had not much trouble in extirpating them, except when the razor passed through those suckers; at each of which, he felt on the instant a most acute pain; but in this manner he fairly got quit of them. When I saw him, he had three such wens: one on the forehead near the edge of the hair, about the size of a horse-bean; another on the short ribs of the right side, as big as a hen's egg; and the third on the greater extremity of the os ulna of the right arm, somewhat less than a common nutmeg. This last was the occasion of his applying to me: for, as it advanced in size, a numbness was produced in the fore arm and hand; so that the use of them had of late been much impaired, as with a palsy: while, from the proximity of the wen to the joint of the elbow, he was afraid of employing his razor, as he had been used to do in other parts of his body.

"Upon examination, I found these wens to be hard, indolent tumours, sitting loose and moveable upon the cellular membrane. . . . I directed it to be cut off."

But of his cases none perhaps has stirred more interest than that described in "An Account of a Blow upon the Heart, and of its Effects."

"On the 11th of September, 1762, Richard Bennet, a lad about fourteen years of age, was brought to a consultation of the physicians and surgeons of St. Thomas's Hospital. His disorder was a palpitation of the heart; so very violent to the touch, that we all concluded it to be an aneurysm, and without remedy. . . . He was taken into the hospital that same day, being Saturday. . . . But on the Tuesday morning following, he died, without any previous alarm or alteration.

"The origin of his complaint was a blow, which he had received six months before, from the master whom he served, as waiter in a public house. The master had owned that he had pushed him slightly on the left side with his hand. The boy informed us that he himself was then carrying a plate under his arm; and that the blow or push, from his master, drove the edge of the plate forcibly between two of his ribs. He was immediately very ill from the hurt; sick, and in great pain. His mother also informed us, that she thought the palpitation was more violent about a fortnight after the accident, than when we examined him. . . .

"On the day of his death, Mr. Cowell opened him; when to our great surprise, we found no aneurysm, nor the least extravasation of blood either from the cavities of the heart or the large vessels. But on the left ventricle of the heart, near it's apex, there was a livid spot, almost as large as a half-crown piece, bruised and jelly-like; the part underneath being mortified quite to the cavity of the ventricle. From thence upward, toward the auricle, there went several livid specks and tracts of inflammation, tending in like manner to gangrene. The heart did also, throughout its whole surface, adhere very closely to the pericardium; and the whole outer surface of the pericardium, as closely, to the lungs. The other viscera were quite sound.

"So that the mischief here was properly a contusion of the heart; the edge of the plate having struck it, probably at the instant of its greatest diastole."

The Man

Of Akenside the man it is not easy to write in approving terms. He was ambitious, arrogant, petulant, conceited, and wanting from time to time in that humanity which should characterize the physician.

Lettsom, who walked Akenside's wards as a pupil, has left the most unprepossessing account of him, and from it much of the unkind opinion derives:

"Great was my disappointment in finding Akenside the most supercilious and unfeeling physician that I had then, or have since known. If the poor affrighted patients did not return a direct answer to his queries, he would often instantly discharge them from the Hospital. He evinced a particular disgust to females, and generally treated them with harshness. I was informed that this moroseness was occasioned by disappointment in love; but hapless must have been that female that should have been placed under his tyranny.

"I was inexpressibly shocked at an instance of his inhumanity exercised towards a patient in Abraham's Ward, to whom he had ordered bark in boluses; who in consequence of not being able to swallow them, so irritated Akenside, as to order the sister of the ward to discharge him from the hospital, adding 'He shall not die under my care.' As the sister was removing him, in obedience to the doctor, the patient expired.

"I never knew him to spit, nor would he suffer any pupil to spit in his presence. One of them once accidentally did so, who stood at some distance behind him. I was present. The doctor instantly span round on his artificial heel, and hastily, to demand 'Who was the person that spat in his face?'

"Sometimes he would order some of the patients on his visiting days to precede him with brooms to clear the way, and prevent the patients from too nearly approaching him. On one of these occasions Richard Chester, one of the Governors upbraided him for his cruel behaviour. 'Know,' said he, 'thou art a servant of this Charity.'" (Abraham, 1933.)

But all opinion was not quite so censorious. Mr. Meyrick, a surgeon and apothecary, frequently called in Akenside in consultation. To use his own words—"I knew him as a friend and recommended him as a physician. We were not much alike, for he was stiff and set, and I all life and spirits. He often frowned upon me in a sick room. He lost a good deal of business by the solemn sententiousness of his air and manner."

There is a long, balanced, and on the whole favourable study of Akenside by the lawyer-litérateur George Hardinge in Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, with which I would conclude these quotations:

"My father admired him as a gifted poet, as a man of genius, of learning, and of taste. . . . As I grew up into man, Akenside honoured me with a most affectionate regard. . . . When I came from College to the Inns of Court . . . I was often his dinner-guest, and generally with him alone. In addition to all his powers, arising from his genius and his eloquence, I had the enjoyment of his portfolio enriched by capital prints. . . . He had in general society a pomp and stiffness of manner, not of expression. . . . But the misfortune of this manner was in some degree connected with his figure and appearance. He looked as if he never could be undressed; and the hitch in his gait . . . compared with a solemn cast in his features, was, at the best, of a kind that was not companionable and rather kept strangers at a distance from him. Though his features were good, manly and expressive, a pale complexion of rather a sickly hue, and the laboured primness of a powdered wig in stiff curl, made his appearance altogether unpromising, if not grotesque. But, where he was intimate, was admired, and was pleased with his party, he conversed most eloquently and gracefully. He had the misfortune, however, to have little or no taste for *humour*, and he took a jest very ill. . . . His religious opinions were, I believe, a little whimsical and peculiar, but in general he kept them very much to himself. . . . He lived incomparably well."

These three commentaries, representative of a number of others, are all agreed on the complex character of the man. They underline the mixture of genius and—to use their contemporary idiom—of melancholy which are to be found in him. It was a melancholy at times corrosive, but more often, and especially in the company of his peers, mellow and kindly. But it would be a mistake to regard him as profoundly unhappy or dissatisfied with his achievements. After all, he had made his way from the northern city of his birth to the great metropolis, endowed only with his natural gifts and mother wits to become, in the words of his admirer, Cooper, "the twofold disciple of Apollo."

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FIVE YEARS OF GENERAL PRACTICE

A STUDY IN SIMPLE EPIDEMIOLOGY

BY

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Until recently epidemiology was regarded as a relatively dull branch of medicine dealing largely with analysis of mortality rates and notifiable infections. Now, thanks to the teachings and writings of a more enlightened generation of epidemiologists, it has acquired a new and dynamic conception applicable to many common diseases in all branches of medicine, and it has developed a live philosophy whose principles are necessary in resolving many of the present-day medical problems.

In a like fashion "general practice" has also been neglected and untried as a field of medical research, and it is only in the past half decade that there has been some reawakening of interest. The scope of research in general practice has become apparent with the advantages of close doctor-patient relationships, of the knowledge of patients' personal, family, and social backgrounds, and of a close and intimate follow-up that may extend for the lifetime of patient and/or doctor.

A marriage of these two branches—general practice and epidemiology—would be expected to result in some interesting and profitable observations. This paper is presented to show some of the potentialities of epidemiological and clinical research in general practice. The subjects studied were chiefly the "trivial" and "minor" diseases of the community; but then these are also the common disorders that affect the majority and which entail overall a very significant amount of personal suffering, with natural economic costs. They were studied over a period of five years (1952-6) inclusive in one London suburban practice by means of simple methods that were eminently compatible with the daily routine and which did not interfere in any way with the normal happy doctor-patient relationships that exist in general practice.

Methods

Research, clinical and epidemiological, depends essentially on proper planning and record-keeping and on a discriminative analysis of the results. The methods and techniques have to be developed to fit the investigation being undertaken and the individual or group using them. In this practice the methods of recording have been evolved over the past 10 years and have been so adapted to the normal