ORTHODOX MEDICINE;

AN ADDRESS,

DELIVERED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BATH
AND BRISTOL BRANCH OF THE PROVINCIAL MEDICAL
AND SURGICAL ASSOCIATION.

By JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS, M.D.,

President for the Year.

ON occasions such as the present, when the practitioners of our art are brought together at regularly recurring periods, one is naturally led to view the present in relation to the afore and after time. I will not attempt to compare the present condition of our Branch Association with the past or to speculate on its future progress, though in considering it in both these aspects we might truly take up a cheerful and gratulatory tone; for it has stood the trial of time, it has shown that its strength has not depended on the novelty of its interest; and the losses which it has in the course of chance and time suffered by the death or removal of members have been filled up by the steady influx of new recruits. Nor is it too much to say, that there has been an obvious advance in our prosperity during the last few years; nor will it be thought to involve anything like invidious comparison, or to present anything more than the simply true and just view of the case, if I remark that this success has been mainly attributable to the intelligent and strenuous exertions of the gentlemen who have been so kind as to undertake the onerous offices of secretaries.

From the state of our Association I will venture to pass to a far wider field, and to offer you a very few observations on topics which I trust will not be considered inappropriate to such a meeting as the present.

In the arduous and absorbing pursuits of medical life, the practitioner has generally enough to do in meeting the emergencies of the day and the hour. He toils on anxiously bearing in mind that golden injunction, "Oh! man, know thou thy work, and do it." He has scarcely any breathing time for "looking before and after." On, on he must fag; the wheel of events which he at once treads upon, and helps to keep in motion, will still revolve, and he must not lose his footing while he is speculating and philosophizing. He is therefore apt to forget or overlook the changes which have been going on about him, and in the very scene of his exertions. But it would be good for him now and then to pause and look around; for he would see much to encourage and cheer, and something to incite him to still greater exertions in the cause of science and humanity. Let me, then, on this occasion, invite you to join me in a moment's survey of that part of the world and its affairs in which we, as practitioners, are more immediately interested. And, first, let us glance at the state of our profession as a profession: and here, I think, there is little to be seen but what prompts us to mutual congratulation. It cannot be doubted that it is daily increasing in knowledge and wisdom; and that the proofs of this increase are to be seen in the

attainments and character of its members generally, and more especially in the improved and improving education of those who are entering it. How that education differs from what was pursued not many years ago, in the range of its scientific requirements, I need not point out to you, but I cannot help noticing particularly the great change for the better in the most important department of all—I mean the practical instruction. "Walking the hospitals," as the old-fashioned phrase went, was often only lounging through them, and the only professional topic of interest was the last or the next astounding capital operation. But all this is changed, and through the talent, zeal and fidelity of the clinical teachers, both in medicine and in surgery, our young friends come from their hospital perambulations really enlightened as to the proper mode of dealing with those ordinary cases, the management of which will be the main occupation of their lives.

It has been the custom at the annual meeting of the Parent Association to survey the accessions to our professional knowledge made during each foregoing year. Could a digest of those reports be drawn up from the commencement of the Association, nearly twenty years ago, and a comparison drawn between the amount of information gained during that period, and the previous two decades, I cannot doubt that the advantage would appear decidedly in our own era. It seems to me that the great events between 1810 and 1820 were the publication of Laennec's immortal "Treatise on Auscultation," and of Sir Charles Bell's *Researches on the Nerves of Sensation and Motion*, and that between 1820 and 1830, the great achievements were in the field of pathological anatomy, and of transcendental or philosophical anatomy. The former of these certainly reached its culminating point during this period, and not very much in the way of discovery after that time was left for the mere scalpel of the necroscopist. It is of course out of the question for me to recite even in the most summary way, the history of our science and art since 1830. It will be enough to hint at a few broad facts that will speak for themselves.

In the department of anatomy we point to that unravelling of the ultimate texture of living structure technically called histology, under the help of the microscope, including, as it does, that wide-embracing idea of cell-growth, which has now become so familiar to us. In physiology I need only advert to the improvement of our notions respecting secretion, and nutrition, and generation, by the combined instruction of comparative anatomy, microscopy, and chemical research. A prominent place must ever be awarded to the collateral researches of Prövit, and Mulder, and Liebig, and the other chemists who have devoted themselves to the analysis of organic substances: for what was organic chemistry before the period which we are now cursorily reviewing? The modern physiology of the nervous system, though dating its birth from the discovery of Sir C. Bell, may be said to have attained the most important amount of its present growth and development within this period. It matters but little.

to the world how much had been hinted or sketched out in our department by Prochaska, or whether recent and ingenious observers have been too jealous as to the originality and value of their researches. It is enough for us to look at such a report of the physiology of the nervous system as was drawn up for the British Association by Dr. Henry, in 1832 or 1833; and to compare the knowledge at that time respecting the functions of the spinal cord, the cerebellum, the corpora quadrigemina, the thalami optici, the corpora striata, and the cerebral hemispheres or ganglia, with that which is now current amongst us, and to perceive how much we have learned from Dr. Marshall Hall, Mr. Newport, Dr. Carpenter, Dr. Todd, and Mr. Solly.

In pathology there are certain ideas to which we have become so habituated, and which have so grown with our growth, that we are unconscious of, or have forgotten, the recent date of their origin. Such is the humoralism of the present time; a formula of which medical thought cannot now divest itself. It is true that the dawn of this idea may be observed a little anteriorly to the time we are surveying. The "Anatomie Pathologique" of Andral, (in my humble judgment one of the most influential works of our century,) gave the first, though faint, expression to our modern humoral pathology, and it was published in 1829. Glance at your present notions of fevers, of puerperal sequelæ, of erysipelas, of certain cerebral affections in connection with the pathology of the blood and the secretions, and including that fertile subject of toxæmia, which has only partially yielded as much as it is capable of affording, and consider how little had been contributed to your knowledge of the subject before the time I speak of. And here I cannot but notice one of the most important pathological discoveries of our age—that renal malady, which, as Englishmen, we should be proud to designate as *Bright's disease*; for, setting apart the value of the discovery in connection with dropsy and albuminuria, I confidently ask whether the fellow to it in importance can be pointed out, when we consider the researches which have grown out of it, and which have not only enlightened the whole pathology of the kidneys, but have given an impulse to the study of secretory disorders in general, and have been most influential in drawing attention to what I have already hinted at—the contamination of the blood by matters which have failed to be eliminated.

For us, the representatives of orthodoxy, it would be enough to hint at improvements in pathology, being assured that there would be therapeutical deductions of less or more value. But, apart from those improvements in our *art* which have sprung from the improvements in our *science*, in certain special diseases, have we not in our general practice learned to be more wisely bold and more wisely timid? Have we not learned in certain diseases to stand aloof, and, instead of revolutionizing the processes of nature, to interpose only with the view of abetting the sanative, and restraining the destructive, tendencies! Have we not learned to spare the lancet in those cases in which the

brain has suffered a local injury, or in which its functions have been less disordered by hydraulic causes than by the poisons which the blood has carried to the organ, whether it has derived them from some taint in the body itself, or from some outward form? The depurative treatment of fevers, and our attempts, though often unsuccessful, at correcting the faults in the blood in these diseases, are all in the right direction. But I think that we may indicate the management of chronic disease in general as most surely marking the advancement of our therapeutics. It is true that a great change is observable in the treatment of acute diseases. When and where do we witness that terrible blood-shedding which was once so familiar to us, and to which we were once so callous? Why have so many lancets become rusty? What have been the scouring ideas that have purged our officinæ of so much of their perilous stuff? This change of practice has, it seems to us, had more than one cause:—1stly, we have learned that the abstraction of blood, even in the purest and most sthenic phlegmasiæ, cannot summarily eject the disease; it can but so qualify the blood, and so moderate the *vis a tergo*, and so alter the capillary circulation, and so influence the secretory actions, and so modify the neurotic element of what, however simple, is still a composite malady, as to place the suffering organs in a better train for the resumption of their natural state. I need not say that I do not here allude to cases of mere local hyperæmia, in which the curative influence of bleeding is more direct. 2ndly, we have learned to use other antiphlogistic remedies more freely, and yet discriminatingly, more especially opium, mercury, and antimony, and also to wait more patiently for spontaneous improvement. But, 3rdly, there has been a change in the type of that which we have to deal with. Unless our perceptive faculties have changed, we do not now, or at least very rarely, meet with those stalwart menacing inflammations which used to put the practitioner upon his mettle, and provoke him to those sanguinary onslaughts in which alone seemed to be safety, either for his patient's life, or for his own reputation as a skilful and determined practitioner. We cannot have almost suddenly grown so very wise as to be able to do without measures approaching to the old severities. Our fathers,—nay, our former selves, could not have been so very blind, and so very rash, as to have quite mistaken the characters of the cases and their exigencies. Why had their active practice superseded the expectant method of the end of the last century? Why was the practitioner, whose lancet was not always between his finger and thumb,—why was he thought feeble and timid, and belonging to the same class as the aged members of the other sex? We have more lights in the present day, but there is no reason to think that our natural vision is so vastly more penetrating. Such inflammatory cases as have been described in our medical classics, and have been witnessed by ourselves, and which now are *rare aves*, were, I cannot doubt, for a cycle of years, common and every day cases. The epidemical constitution of the years has changed, and practice has

changed with it. Would wary, thoughtful, acute observers of the phenomena of disease and the effects of remedies, such as were our fathers, (however imperfect may have been their pathology,) would they have continued to bleed and purge in continued fever, in scarlatina and measles, if such practice had been as uniformly fatal as we believe it would be in these diseases in the present day? Could Dr. Armstrong, with all his eloquence and enthusiasm, have commanded a hearing, unless fevers had been for years more phlogistic than they now are, and than they were in the latter part of his career? I think not. And it is not beyond the possibilities that we may some day have to return towards some of the old modes of procedure, though there is little reason for apprehending anything approaching to the Sangradoism which we can remember, and of which the most remote of the recent apostles was M. Bouillaud.

But while bearing in mind this change of character in acute diseases, we must allow that our depletory practice has been greatly mitigated, if not abolished, in the treatment of chronic maladies. The lancet no longer spurs the downward course of tuberculous cases. The timorous dyspeptic may tell of his headache without fear of the cold steel that is to rescue him from apoplexy or meningitis; and he will confess to a numbness or a vertigo without expecting that cupping-glasses and scarification will inevitably follow, or a threat of being doomed to paralysis. But while we can thus number up proofs of caution and forbearance in our modern practice, of a due respect for the *vis medicatrix*, there is no lack of instances of bold and courageous interference with the *vis vitiatix*. And perhaps they are chiefly to be sought in the annals of surgery and of obstetric medicine. But take one example as *instar omnium*, the administration of æther or chloroform, whether for medical or surgical purposes. There is in this practice, whatsoever else there may be, a noble boldness, I had almost said a divine audacity. This practice, the offspring of our own immediate time, may compare with the most splendid triumphs of human art. I envy not the sentiments or imagination, or rather the want of them, in him who can witness it without emotion;—who can see the temporary annulling of all that distinguishes man as a feeling, moving, thinking, speaking being;—who can see quivering flesh, and tender nerve, and tough fibre, pierced and severed and crushed and torn without suffering, and not feel a glow of enthusiastic admiration for the wise and happy discoverer of this wonderful agency—a throb of exultation at so beneficent a product of human skill, mingled with a feeling of gratitude to Him who had put it into the mind of man to devise such help for his suffering brother.

Did we require any further proof of the advancement of our science, we might find it in the prominence now given to all questions of hygiene, whether with reference to the prevention of disease and the preservation of health in the individual, or to the sanitary condition of the community. But enough of this theme.

I have now to make a few remarks on the state of

public opinion in reference to our art. At first sight we might presume that the same considerations which have afforded *us* subjects for mutual encouragement and congratulation would also weigh with the laity in some degree, and augment their confidence in our ability to yield them succour. And with the more thoughtful, and well-informed, and sensible, I believe this is actually the case. But, alas! the thoughtful, and the well-informed, and the sensible, do not constitute the whole public. Some years ago this influence was more marked than at present. The public saw the exertions made by the medical examining bodies to raise the standard of qualification; they had some idea of the rapid progress of our science; now and then they got some glimpses of our doings through the medical journals, which were then assuming a great degree of activity. In society they met the members of our profession, and they could not but observe their growth in intelligence and general accomplishments. But within the period, the review of which has presented us with matter for honest exultation as a profession, two notable heresies have sprung up, and have succeeded in obtaining not a few victims from the laity, and some converts, or perverts, from our own body.

We cannot blame the public. Ignorance is an object of pity, not of reprehension. And surely to a non-professional mind there is something quite charming and seductive in these so-called systems of cure. To wash away all taint of disease, all dregs of the nauseous and noxious drugs that had been imbibed in the days of darkness—to cleanse all this by pure water, within and without, is a notion that carries refreshment into the depths of the inner spirit, and makes one indulge in delightful transcendental visions of the regenerating efficacy of this corporeal baptism. Not less attractive is that system which banishes all the bugbears of the nursery and the sick-room,—which puts aside *omne quod exit in um, præter remedium*, presents that in an insensible fraction, undistinguishable from the sugar or the water that contains it, and bars out all the terrible inflictions of the antiphlogistic regimen! Yes, let us consider very leniently the adhesion of the laity to systems adapted to a love of simplicity and to an abhorrence of temporary suffering even for ultimate good. It is so delightful to travel by royal roads to health as well as to learning. They do not know the dangers of the road, and what benefits they lose for ever by the irreparable loss of time. They cannot follow the reasoning involved in medical proof. Why do they ask *our* aid? They may know that we have been diligent in acquiring professional knowledge; that we are reputed for skill and experience; that certain of their friends were seriously ill, and that while under our care they recovered. But they may say to themselves, “Doctor Aquaticus and Doctor Minimus have received a regular education; they must be learned men. Dr. Aquaticus cured Mrs. Weakly of that inveterate lumbago that had resisted even Hollo-way’s pills; and our little nephew has, by the help of Dr. Minimus got through the measles, and without one of those abominable black doses, the very sight of

which used to throw him into such terrible rages. Why should not we, too, send for Dr. Aquaticus or Doctor Minimus?" We cannot prevent these processes of thought and their practical results, till the public mind is better informed. The best thing we can wish, both on their account and our own, is that they should study physiology, and learn some rudiments of pathology, sufficient to assure them of the rational basis of medicine, and that their true safety depends upon it. We have nothing to fear from the illumination of the public. We do not shun the light. We do not depend on mystery. Ours is not an *occult* art. No initiatory rites are needed save those which are involved in the study of nature in health and disease. We court inquiry; and those who look *deepest* into our principles and proceedings are those from whom we have least to fear. Not to *us* and to *our* science can be applied that mournful complaint that

"Those who know the most,
Must mourn the deepest o'er that fatal truth,—
The tree of knowledge is not that of life."

For ours is not forbidden knowledge; nay, we are invited to it by the gracious author of our being, through various analogies in nature, and ten thousand hints from "healing balm and medicinal gum."

Were other evidence wanting to prove that the honest well-educated practitioner prefers laying open his processes to those who can understand them, (for certainly it is of no use to ask for or permit the presence and spectatorship of those who do not understand what he is about,) I may adduce the willingness with which he submits his views and his treatment to the scrutiny of any honourable well-instructed professional brother. He may fear the semivision and senseless gossip of the laity; but he has nothing to dread from the observation and the report of a scientific and experienced witness. I confidently appeal to the high-minded skilful practitioners by whom I have the honour to be this day surrounded, whether it has not always been a relief to them, during the conduct of a difficult case, to find some medical friend or relative of the family who, though not sharing the responsibility, has the opportunity of ascertaining their opinions correctly, who can enter into their perplexities, and who can understand the indications of cure or relief which they are endeavouring to fulfil.

But I cannot conclude this subject without alluding to those who have become separatists from our professional communion. I do not ask you to condescend to think of those who never were of us,—those insolent pretenders who, from the walks of common life, and without any training whatsoever, have dared to assume the garb and wield the staff that should be handled by none but true Asclepiadæ.

Misericordia e giustizia gli sdegna:
Non ragioniam di lor, ma guarda e passa.
(Mercy and justice scorn them both,
Speak not of them, but look, and pass them by.)"

But what shall we say of those who once knew better things,—those apostates from the faith handed down to us by Hippocrates and Sydenham? Simply that they have cut themselves off, and that we hold them as cut off. As

practitioners we will have nothing to do with them. They have no part or lot with us. They have chosen to stray: let them go, and they leave no very deplorable hiatus.

Yet, let me guard this dismissal with one exception; I would not include in it any honest hydropathic practitioner, who regards the water-cure as only a branch of therapeutics to be used in alliance with regular medicine. On the contrary, one would gladly hail such auxiliaries; for that there is a potency for good as well as for evil in that method cannot, I think, be denied. Indeed, it would be strange if the constant employment and observation of such an agent as cold water had not led to some improvement in the application of it, and to some extension of our knowledge of its powers. We only pronounce our ban on those who declare hydropathy to be the only proper method of treatment, or, who use it in conjunction with homœopathy and mesmerism. Have we any like exception to offer in favour of homœopathic practitioners? None. For them we have no qualification or mitigation of our sentence. On them the science of medicine pronounces its distinctest and deepest-toned anathema. But, setting medicine aside, common sense derides them, humanity reproaches them, and reason sets upon them the ineffaceable brand of *impostor* or *simpleton*. Is this harsh and intolerant language? It is not. Can any terms from us be too severe or contemptuous towards those who urge us to turn our backs on that august temple of medicine, whose foundations are laid deep in nature, whose pillars have been slowly raised by the science and art of successive centuries; and whose precincts are consecrated by the genius, the devotion, and self-sacrifice of some of the world's greatest benefactors;—and who bid us to go and worship in that miserable tent, which was stretched out but yesterday, and where the mutterings of its half crazy fabricator are mistaken for the responses of an oracle.

Are we intolerant? No. We extend our Christian charity to the utmost over the motives of the poor pervers. But while we are ready to admit the purity of their intentions, we do not choose so to insult *our* own understandings, as to say that we feel the smallest respect for *theirs*. They may be good and amiable; but we decline assenting to the assertion of their wisdom. Men who can imagine that most chronic maladies owe their origin to the itch, and who really believe as to the infinitesimal dosings, what can easily be reduced to a mathematical absurdity, are surely not to be placed in the same category as those children of whom their parent is said to be justified. I forbear inquiry into the consistency of those disciples of Hahnemann, who depart from his system of dilution, and who can reconcile it to their notions of propriety to recommend castor oil and cod-liver oil, to administer enemata, to apply blisters and fomentations, and to call in what is frequently the perilous aid of hydropathy. I do not inquire into this, lest we should end in the conclusion that their consciences are attenuated almost in the same degree as their doses. Besides, we may

leave them to the expostulation and reproof of the more faithful of their brethren, who will certainly not fail to hurl at them some denunciatory text from the dreamy delirious revelations of their prophet Samuel! But you may say, surely not all of them are simpletons: surely some of them have shown ability in other matters. It may be so. I am not here to inquire what precise amount of mental soundness or capacity is compatible with a belief in the homœopathic system. It would border on such medico-legal investigations as those in which we have to ascertain whether competence to the management of affairs may be predicated of a mind that is subject to some particular delusion.

That laymen of great powers of mind have adopted homœopathic treatment for themselves or their families, should go for nothing. They are not led to it by reasoning, but by what they fancy to be experience, and which is indeed only empiricism. Every pestilent quackery that has ever been palmed upon the world has numbered among its victims the wise and the witty, as well as the dull and the ignorant. And the wise have adopted it because they have not been wise in all things. They were sick; they swallowed decillionths of oyster shells; and they got well. This is their argument, and its fallacy is too obvious to deserve even a momentary comment.

Pardon this long digression; but the subject is so important that it ought not to pass without some emphatic notice. I strongly advise my brethren to take an uncompromising part, not only by refusing to co-operate, even in the most indirect manner, with homœopathic practitioners, but also to show the public in what light we regard these marauders. I need not tell you that the only really remunerative cases to the general practitioner, (except in the feeling of satisfaction in the discharge of an arduous duty, in the achievement of success in a difficult art, and in the thought of having saved a life, or assuaged pain and distress,) are those in which his duty consists mainly in standing by the bed-side of the patient, ready to interpose, if in his judgment any emergency arises; though they are cases to the cure of which nature alone is usually adequate. Nothing can really compensate him for the anxiety incident to the life-and-death encounters in grave cases, to say nothing of fatiguing days and broken nights. If, therefore, his attendance is sought by a family in such cases only, (and the instinct of the patient or his friends will generally lead them away from homœopaths on such occasions,) he is justified in requiring that his reward should be very different from what it is when he has all kinds of cases submitted to him.

I have no fear that this view of the case can be considered mercenary. Everywhere it is allowed, that from no profession is more gratuitous aid received by the public, and I am proud to believe that it is held to be one of the highest privileges of the profession that it has the power, and is allowed to render help to mankind as a labour of love. But as our patients often quote to us, "The labourer is worthy of his hire," so we may urge that the hire should bear relation to the kind and the degree of the labour. To employ a

soldier on no service but fighting in pitched battles, bivouacking on malarious plains, or leading the "forlorn hope" of a storming party, and then to tender him for such service the same pay as a soldier who is engaged all the year round, and has ordinary garrison duty, or the light routine of the parade ground, in a frequent exchange for the hardships and perils of a campaign, would surely be considered to be very unreasonable and very unjust, yet it is a case precisely parallel with that to which I have just adverted.

I trust that I have not gone too near the borders of levity in some of the remarks which I have ventured to offer to your consideration. Believe me that no one can feel more deeply than I do the seriousness of medical practice. We ought ever to nourish a sentiment of reverence for our art, and a solemn conviction of the weightiness of the interests which are involved in it. To say nothing of the value of the lives of the good, the great, the wise, the brave, and the beautiful, the issues of which are in our hands as far as they can be in mortal power; to say nothing of our high vocation of imparting succour and relief to the helpless and suffering, we ought to go to our work in the spirit of priests and hierophants—men who have to minister in holy things, men who have to tend the sacred lamp of life, to guard and sustain the temple of the human body—that fabric on which creative power has lavished most marvellous resources, most consummate artifice. Let us constantly bear in mind that pregnant saying of the German sage, Novalis,—“We touch God when we lay our hands on a human body;” so shall we approach it with fitting reverence.

SUCCESSFUL CASE OF

OPERATION FOR THE REMOVAL OF AN OVARIAN TUMOUR,

WEIGHING TWENTY-FIVE POUNDS.

By JOHN BEALES, Esq., M.R.C.S., HALESWORTH.

Read at the Suffolk Branch Meeting, at Framlingham, June 27, 1851.

IN the early part of September, 1850, I was consulted by Eliza Smith, of Darsham, aged 30, unmarried, for an enlargement of her abdomen, resembling that of a person at the full period of pregnancy. She stated that she had lived in the capacity of lady's maid for the last two years; that in December, 1849, she discovered an enlargement of the left side of her body, which gradually increased up to the month of August, 1850, when she was obliged to seek medical relief for loss of appetite, loss of strength, with wasting of her legs and arms. During the progressive state of this enlargement the catamenia were regular up to the month of April, after which time they returned every fortnight, up to the following August, but in small quantity. During this period she was perfectly free from pain, and her general health suffered but little. Upon examina-