

CHAPTER II.

The diathesis of diseases, agreeable to Brown's Elements, I conceive to be the truth. I became somewhat acquainted with this system about 22 years ago.

Agreeable to that plan, there are but two kinds of diseases of the human body: consisting 1. in *Plethora* and *Irritation*; and 2 in *Debility*, *Weakness* and *Languor*.

Generally speaking, it is of importance for us to know to which of these an afflicted sufferer belongs. The cases I have compared to a lighted candle—if your candle burns strong and has a superfluous wick, then you may safely snuff it; but if it is dim, burns dull, and its wick is too short already, *you must beware of snuffing it*, lest you put it out. You had better pick open your wick, and gently feed the flame until you bring it to burn well.

Plethora and Irritation are not so critical. You may then bleed liberally; especially if the pulse is hard and high; No. 2 or No. 3 may then be given to great advantage. I have sometimes taken blood, and succeeded wonderfully, when mere stagnation had nearly prevented the pulse from beating at all.

But it is altogether *critical* in all cases of real debility to which belong all bilious cases, cramps, fits, hysterics, &c. Then blood ought very cautiously to be let, if at all. And all diuretic and weakening medicines, should be very cautiously given, and sometimes carefully avoided. Your treatment should be strengthening and what is called tonic. Such as No. 1, No. 5, No. 9, &c.

Consequently in consumptive cases, nothing in my view is more improper than calomel, British oil, Tar water, &c. And I think it no wonder that consumptions have so long proved mortal, when it is

clear in my mind, that nothing but a recruit of good blood will affect the cure, such poor victims languishing under real debility and weakness. See my note to No. 44.

So that the elements by Brown seems to me plain, reasonable and practicable. But I have to say of his prescriptions, as David did of Saul's armour, when it was put upon him. "*I cannot go with this, for I have not proved it.*" He then chose his sling, his staff, shepherds bag and stones, because he was used to them, and could recollect what he had heretofore done with them.

I acknowledge myself highly indebted to Brown for his doctrines of excitability, of predisposition of diseases, and observation on the pulse. The nature and use of opium and other stimulants, and his opinion concerning the consumption, and its being a curable disease.

But I conceive that after all, he has in a measure missed the radical cause of the consumption, and that mere stimulants will never effect the cure. But since I have buried two or three of my own family with that fatal disease, the iron doctrine has been strongly impressed on my mind. See the note to No. 44.

The few experiments that I have been enabled to make, justify what I have inserted on that subject. I wonder that this doctrine has never been adverted to before (that I know of) especially when I consider that the iron in the blood has been long discovered, and that in Georgia and South Carolina the cachexy* is often cured with iron, when nothing else will cure it; that a recruit of good blood is frequently obtained by giving iron in female weaknesses; and that the observation may so fairly be

*The cachexy is a kind of dropsy, frequent in southern climates.

made, that black-smiths and those that work in iron are never consumptive or dropsical persons.

To Brown's opinion I assent in one thing more, for I am quite of his mind: to wit, *an old man ought never to marry a young woman.*

A word to the wise is enough.

CHAPTER III.

Obstructed Perspiration I suppose to be the real first cause of half the diseases of the human body. In a state of oozing out of perspiration, or what is called moisture on the skin of a person, all over him, which it is allowed (if my recollection is correct) vents and discharges half or more of all that we eat and drink daily.

It would surprise you to see this floating all over you, in a state of health, like water over a piece of watered meadow.

This salutary perspiration is commonly obstructed, and the skin becomes dry by what we commonly call catching cold. Its first symptoms are a stoppage of the nose, sneezing, and frequently a little dull headach.