

5.

He is no chemist. I doubt if he ever read any book of chemistry through. Filled with the chemistry of Nature, he looked with too much contempt on those who wrote on it. It is a remarkable fact, that without ever reading any of the writings of Hippocrates, his theory comes nearer to that of the Father of Medicine than any practitioner I ever knew. The ancient Grecians, in their mythology made Apollo, or Phoebus, the God of Physic, whose general influence was warmth, light, and joy - and his absence of darkness, was cold, sadness, gloominess and death. With this vivifying principle, animating, moving, and unfolding not only vegetables, but man from his embryo-state to his perfect expansion, or destined growth, he traced and explained his health, and his declension from it into disease, and from that to his re-turn to the earth again. This is the ground he stands on. Here he places his fulcrum, and his lever, and by it, he has moved the medical world, and I am deceived if all of us united can drive him off from it. That is his mundane theory, and his theory of man is an epitomé of it. In a word, it is the old doctrine of the Microcosmos without ever having read a word about it; and the fact is that Thomsonism has spread over the Great West, and is fast gaining ground in these Atlantic States.

When Samuel Thomson first called on me, without any letter of introduction, and laid his writings in prose and verse on my table, he said he had never done so with any other man, and requested me to read them. His apology was that he had heard my character, and from the representation of it, he was emboldened to take that unceremonious step. We both spoke with smiling pleasantry while he seemed not a little embarrassed by bashfulness. I confess I considered him as one of visionary men, of whom numbers had, first and last, called on me with their wild schemes and baseless projects. I therefore suffered his papers to remain some time, unexamined. I at length run my eye over his papers, and was struck with the novelty; and shrewdness of remark that shined forth here and there in his writings. They brought to mind the writings of the ancient
Greek

Greek Philosophers & Physicians. He told me he was about printing a book, and mentioned the name of the printer; and fearful that I had treated the Philosophers with too little attention, I determined to find him out. I did so, and invited him to my house; and have never been sorry for it; and have no hesitation in saying that if he has learnt any thing useful from me, I have learnt many things valuable from him. ^P If a Reformation in the practice of Physic within the past 30 years, has actually, taken place in New England, and thence among New-England men inhabiting our vast western regions to whom is it to be specially attributed? Not to any one College or Medical Society. Is there any one man, beyond the Individual already named to whom it can be attributed? What is the name of the man, who left alone, commenced a new practice, and principally by a vegetable of his own discovery, I mean the Sobilia inflata, w. he first tried on himself, and then on his own children, and next on his neighbors, and widening the circle of experience with other plants from year to year, until the jealousy, envy, and malice of rival doctors, involved him in one of the most shameful persecutions that ever disgraced even the old County of Essex, not excepting its Witchcraft. Thomson has related his own sad story, in the Memoirs of his eventful life, and with that naivete or native simplicity, w. savours of genius in every tongue. One of his patients after going through the sudorific process, in defiance of caution, and breaking through all rules exposed himself in a cold, raw state of the weather—caught cold and died. This natural occurrence was seized hold of by a practitioner, and the Emperic was taken up and indicted for murder! and, suffered a rigorous imprisonment disgraceful, utterly disgraceful to a civilized—not to say a christian people.

In the year 1809, (see p. 96 of S. Thomson's narrative of his Life and Sufferings, he was thrown into a most loathsome prison—a dungeon with a convicted criminal—the weather cold, without a wholesome bed, with a blanket infested with vermin, with hardly a glimmer of light through an iron-grated aperture, and with accompaniments of filth a stench too abominable for recollection. In the morning says the sufferer, "there was just light enough through the iron-grates to show the horror of my situation"—

all this cruel persecution at the instigation chiefly of a particular practitioner of physic, who had been long trying to drive Thomson from off what he called his ground.

I forgot to mention that the persecuted practitioner was put in irons, before he was carted to the jail in Newburyport. We refer to the printed narrative of Thomson for the disgusting particulars of his incarceration, and appearance before the Supreme Judicial court, whereof Theophilus Parsons was the presiding judge; and shall only observe that Chief Justice Parsons drew up with his own hand. The indictment stated that Samuel Thomson had, with malice aforethought, murdered Ezra Lovett with Lobelia, a deadly poison [of w^{ch} deadly poison, I have used repeatedly, and taken myself when I needed an emetic, once and again, in quantity of a teaspoonful of the powder of it.]

I am far advanced in life - a long life devoted to the practice of Physic; and thirty years of it, to teaching its principles from my professorial chair of the Theory & Practice of Physic in this University of Cambridge; and I feel it an incumbent duty, imposed on me at my public inauguration, in 1783 (see my Latin Oration on that occasion) to recognize my obligations before the civic authorities of the Commonwealth and of the University, and under that solemn impression to avow, at this time that I consider Samuel Thomson, in almost the light of a martyr, but certainly in that of a Reformer in Medicine. He entered a new and untrodden path and under grievous sufferings, and sore trials, he has proved that the depletings, or anti-phlogestic practice of Sydenham and Rush is not to be implicitly followed in New England. • From the same source we have learnt that hot and pungent articles may be used with more safety and advantage, than Sydenham imagined, and that the use of the lancet should be used with more caution than the worthy and benevolent Dr Rush was aware of, and that ^{the} Thomsonians are too stiff in opinion when they obstinately oppose, and even prohibit the opening of a vein in any case. The wisest and most experienced Physicians know too little of man, and the concomitants of humanity to insist on any of their dogmatical rules in practice, when atmospheres are so variable, and

and in truth so inscutable, and at the same time, the source
of nearly all our epidemics.

Should any European or Asiatic Travelling Philosopher visit
the regions north of the city of Washington, and enquire of me what
was the most prevalent system, or practice of Medicine in New
England, and in the recently settled regions of the West, I
think I must say, it was that first introduced by Samuel
Thompson; and should he enquire farther, who and what
is the person you mention, I should say, he was a man of
but an ordinary New England, common school education,
but a man of strong mind, naturally inquisitive, and of a
persevering temperament, and with all benevolent and
generous. I should furthermore add that he was skillful
beyond example in the judicious application of certain
vegetables in the cure of diseases - that is, of certain disorders
more especially chronic ones - or those resulting from
errors of the first, and second concoction to speak after the
phraseology of the old school; that he had paid great at-
tention to the powers and office, of the stomach, and chylo-
poetic organs, together with that of the Lungs, and of the
external skin, and duplicature of which passed down from
the mouth, lining or covering, all the internal apparatus
under the vague name of the Mucous Membrane, endowed
with a sensibilitas vital and unique when disturbed any
morbid irritation, and requiring a sanative treatment,
directly opposite of that heretofore denominated the Antiphlo-
gistic. Hither he first introduced it in his treatment of
the ulcerated sore throat or Cyananche Maligna.