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IMAGINATION,

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AS A CAUSE AND AS A CURE OF  
DISORDERS OF THE BODY;

EXEMPLIFIED BY

FICTITIOUS TRACTORS,

AND

EPIDEMICAL CONVULSIONS.

"DECIPIMUR SPECIE." HOR.

Read to the Literary and Philosophical Society of Bath.

*A new Edition, with Additional Remarks.*

BY

JOHN HAYGARTH, M. D.

F. R. S. LOND. AND EDINB.

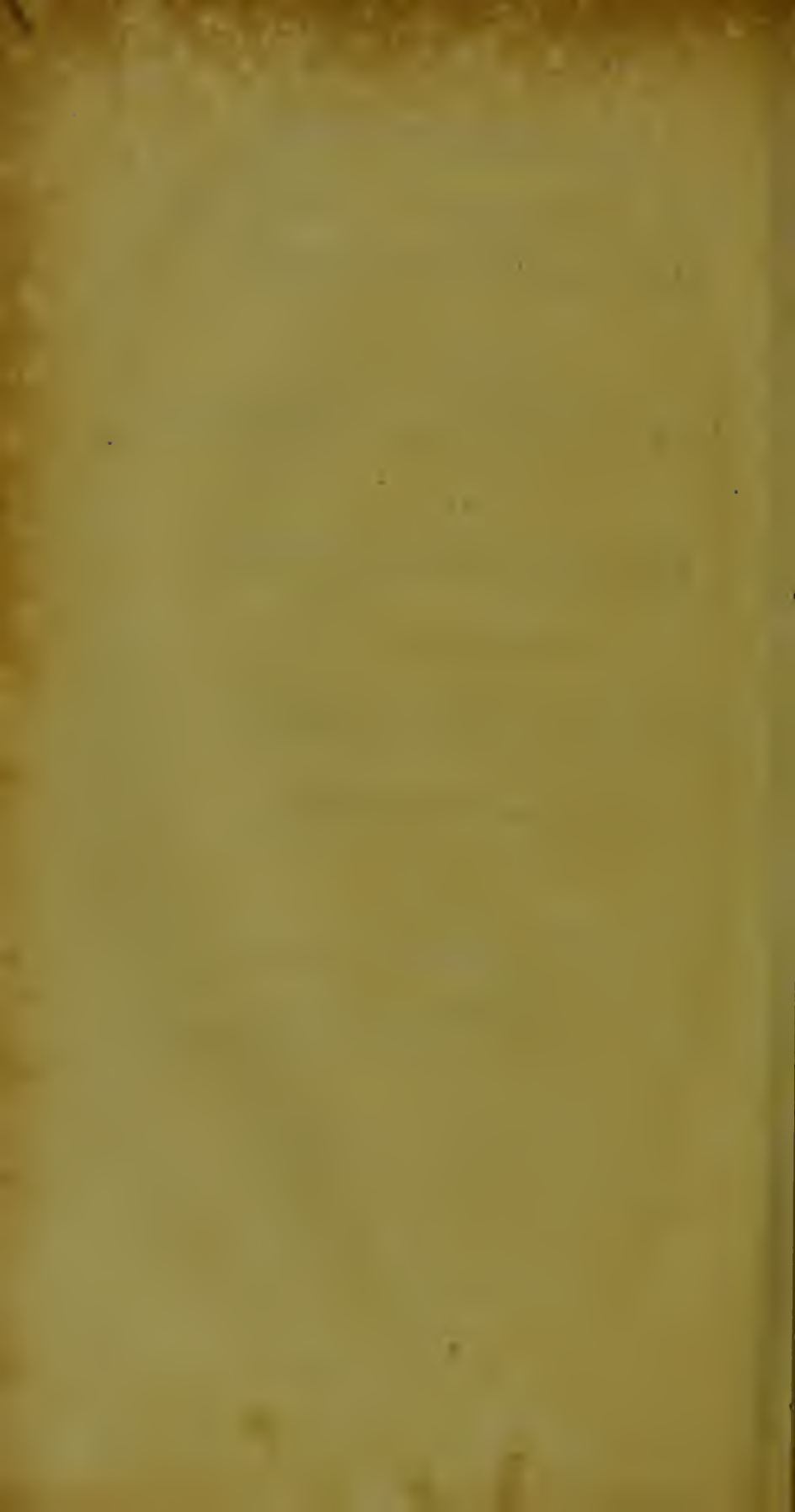
OF THE ROYAL MEDICAL SOCIETY AT EDINBURGH, AND OF THE AMERICAN  
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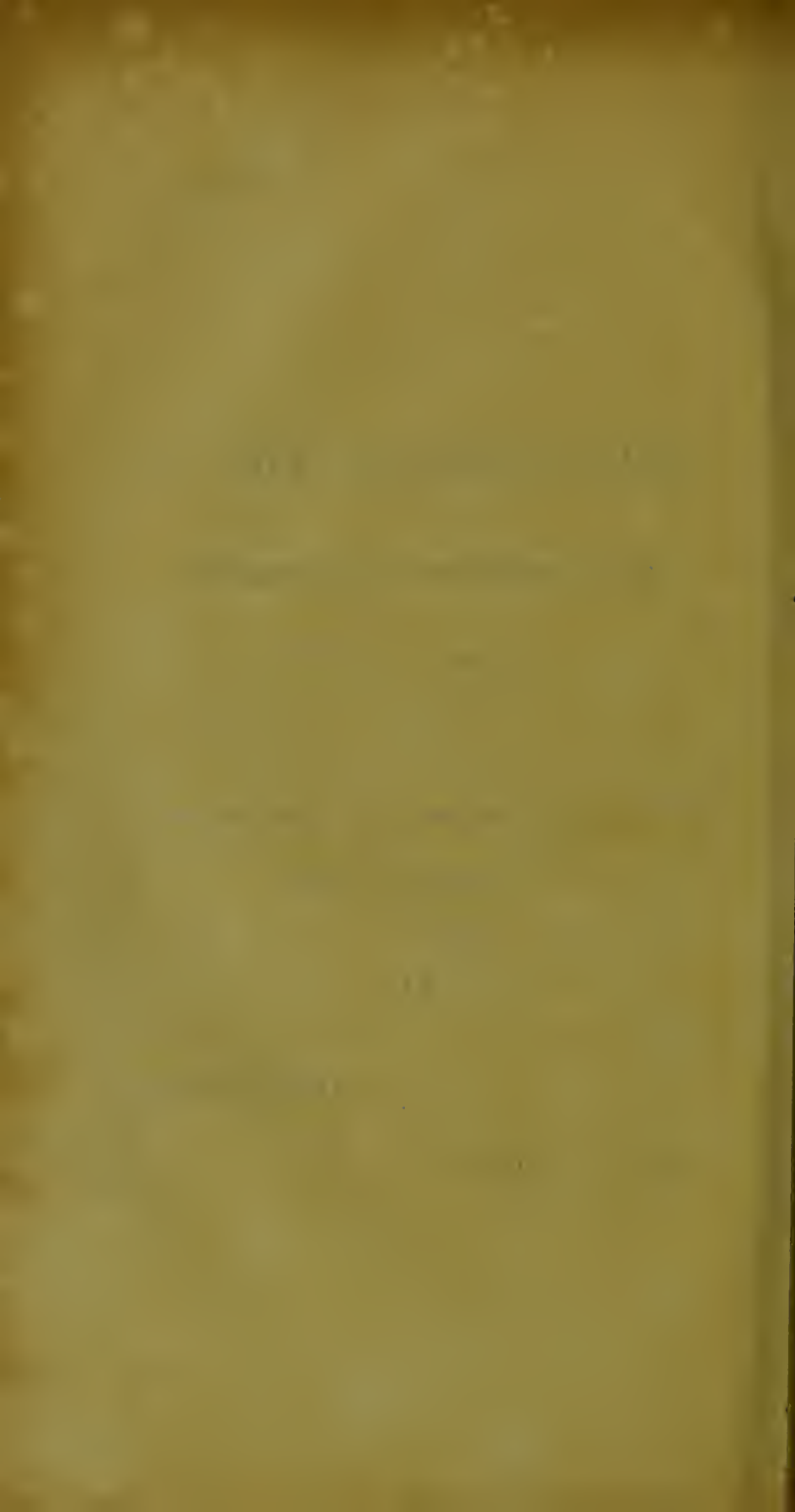
TO  
WILLIAM FALCONER, M. D. F. R. S.

THESE FEW PAGES ARE ADDRESSED,  
AS A MEMORIAL  
OF A  
MUTUAL, CORDIAL, AND CONSTANT FRIENDSHIP,  
FOR THIRTY-SIX YEARS,

BY

J. HAYGARTH.

BATH, JAN. 1ST, 1800.



## TRACTORS.

THAT faculty of the mind which is denominated the Imagination, has been the subject of two very elegant compositions in the English language, in prose and poetry, by ADDISON and AKENSIDE. It has not wholly escaped the notice of medical writers, but merits their farther investigation. This slight Essay may, perhaps, incite others to prosecute the inquiry more fully, in order to extend the power of physicians to prevent and cure the maladies of mankind.

### §. I.

In physick as well as in philosophy, to discover the cause of an effect is frequently a very nice and difficult investigation. The success of medical practice essentially depends upon this faculty of sagacious discernment. One who is carried away by every wind of doctrine, and who recommends every new medicine which is in vogue and becomes popular, without con-

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sidering

sidering the evidence and fair probability of its efficacy, will frequently administer inert, and sometimes injurious, remedies to his patients.

“ The Tractors have obtained such high reputation at Bath, even among persons of rank and understanding, as to require the particular attention of physicians. Let their merit be impartially investigated, in order to support their fame, if it be well founded, or to correct the publick opinion, if merely formed upon delusion. Such a trial may be accomplished in the most satisfactory manner, and ought to be performed without any prejudice. Prepare a pair of false, exactly to resemble the true, Tractors. Let the secret be kept inviolable, not only from the patient, but every other person. Let the efficacy of both be impartially tried, beginning always with the false Tractors. The cases should be accurately stated, and the reports of the effects produced by the true and false Tractors be fully given, in the words of the patients.”

‘ This hint, and in these terms, I communicated to Dr. FALCONER. He entirely approved the idea, and very readily consented to make the proposed trial upon the most proper cases which could be selected from his patients in the General Hospital. Of nearly the same shape as the metallick we contrived two wooden Tractors, which were painted to resemble them in colour. Five cases were chosen of chronick rheumatism, in the ankle, knee, wrist, and hip. One of the patients had also  
gouty

gouty pains. All the affected joints, except the last, were swelled, and all of them had been ill for several months.

‘ On the 7th of January, 1799, the wooden Tractors were employed. All the five patients, except one, assured us that their pains were relieved, and three of them that they were much benefited by the first application of this remedy. One felt his knee warmer, and he could walk much better, as he shewed us with great satisfaction. One was easier for nine hours, and till he went to bed, when the pain returned. One had a tingling sensation for two hours. The wooden Tractors were drawn over the skin so as to touch it in the *slightest* manner. Such is the wonderful force of the Imagination!

‘ Next day, January 8th, the true metallick Tractors of Mr. PERKINS were employed exactly in like manner, and with similar effects. All the patients were in some measure, but not more, relieved by the second application, except one, who received no benefit from the former operation, and who was not a proper subject for the experiment, having no existing pain, but only stiffness of her ankle. They felt (as they fancied) warmth, but in no greater degree than on the former day.

‘ This trial was witnessed by Dr. FALCONER, Mr. NICHOLLS, surgeon of the Hospital, Mr. FARNELL, apothecary of the Hospital, and myself, on both days; and on the second day by Mr. PHILLOTT, also surgeon

geon of the Hospital. It need not be remarked, how completely the trial illustrates the nature of this popular illusion, which has so wonderfully prevailed, and spread so rapidly; it resembles, in a striking manner, that of Animal Magnetism, which merited the attention of Dr. FRANKLIN, when ambassador from America, and of other philosophers at Paris. If any person would repeat these experiments, they should be performed with due solemnity. During the process, the wonderful cures which this remedy is said to have performed ought to be particularly related. Without these indispensable aids, other trials will not prove as successful as those which are above reported. The whole effect undoubtedly depends upon the impression which can be made upon the patient's Imagination.

‘ This method of discovering the truth, distinctly proves to what a surprising degree mere fancy deceives the patient himself; and if the experiment had been tried with the metallick Tractors only, they might and most probably would have deceived even medical observers. Yet this test of truth was perfectly candid. A fair opportunity was offered to discover whether the metallick Tractors possessed any efficacy superior to the ligneous Tractors, or wooden pegs.

‘ In the decision of this question, it ought to be duly considered that the chronic rheumatism is a very obstinate and permanent disorder; that out of the five cases, (being all who were subjected to the trial) four  
of



of the patients believed themselves immediately, and three remarkably, relieved by the false Tractors; and that this report is founded upon the unanimous testimony of five medical witnesses. This success of the false Tractors can only be exceeded by the exaggerated stories which, for some months past, have been reported in every company with increasing amazement and credulity.

‘ The proposer of these experiments, if he could have produced authentick and conclusive proofs of the real efficacy of the metallick Tractors, would, with equal frankness, and much greater satisfaction, have given his testimony in their favour, as another means of administering relief to the sufferings of mankind. If any proselyte to Perkinism should still believe in the superior virtue of this remedy, both the witnesses of these recent events, and the patients above-mentioned, are ready to satisfy any farther inquiries on this subject.

‘ *Bath, Jan. 24th, 1799.*’

*P. S.* The most intelligent of my medical and other friends advised the immediate publication of these observations, as containing information of considerable importance. But with a view to obtain farther and more decisive observations on this subject, the substance of this paper, accompanied with a pair of wooden Tractors, was sent to two medical friends, to Sir WM. WATSON in London, and to Dr. MONCRIEFFE in  
Bristol,

Bristol, requesting that similar experiments might be repeated in both those cities. The annexed letter from Mr. SMITH was the fortunate result of this communication.

‘ TO JOHN HAYGARTH, M.D.

‘ SIR,

‘ MR. DYER some time since communicated to me the contents of a letter addressed by you to Dr. MONCRIEFFE. Considering it the duty of every regular practitioner to check the dangerous progress of empiricism, I instantly volunteered my services to assist in the design of investigating the merits ignorantly ascribed to Perkinian Electricity. I confess freely to you, that the very respectable American, and even British, testimonies by which it was recommended to the publick, at first staggered me exceedingly. I could not believe, that the gentlemen mentioned in the pamphlet of PERKINS would wilfully bear false witness, and I could scarcely imagine them to have been so deceived. Your hints, however, enabled me to adopt a plan which quickly dissipated the illusion; and I sincerely hope and trust, that the result of the experiments will open the eyes of the publick to so gross an imposition. I must premise that the following were all Hospital patients, and that for the most part their medicines were, for the time, altogether suspended.

1. ‘ ROBERT THOMAS, aged forty-three, who had been for some time under the care of Dr. LOVELL, in  
the

the Bristol Infirmary, with a rheumatick affection of the shoulder, which rendered his arm perfectly useless, was pointed out as a proper object of trial by Mr. T. W. DYER, apothecary to the house.

‘ Tuesday, April 19th, having every thing in readiness, I passed through the ward, and (in a way that he might suspect nothing) questioned him respecting his complaint. I then told him, that I had an instrument in my pocket which had been very serviceable to many in his state; and when I had explained to him how simple it was, he consented to undergo the operation. In six minutes no other effect was produced than a warmth upon the skin, and I feared that this *coup d’essai* had failed. The next day however he told me, that “ he had received so much benefit, that it “ had enabled him to lift his hand from his knee, “ which he had in vain several times attempted on the “ Monday evening, as the whole ward witnessed.” The Tractors I used being made of lead, I thought it adviseable to lay them aside, lest (being metallick points) the proofs against this fraud might be less complete. Thus much, however, was proved—that the patent Tractors possessed no specifick powers independent of simple metals.

‘ Two pieces of wood, properly shaped and painted, were next made use of; and in order to add solemnity to the farce, Mr. BARTON held in his hand a stop-watch, whilst Mr. LAX minuted the effects produced.

In

In four minutes the man raised his hand several inches, and he had lost also the pain in his shoulder, usually experienced when attempting to lift any thing. He continued to undergo the operation daily, and with progressive good effect; for on the 25th he could touch the mantle-piece.

‘ On the 27th, in the presence of Dr. LOVELL and Mr. J. P. NOBLE, two common iron nails, disguised with sealing-wax, were substituted for the pieces of mahogany before used. In three minutes “ he felt “ something moving from his arm to his hand,” and soon after he touched the Board of Rules, which hung a foot above the fire-place. This patient at length so far recovered, that he could carry coals, &c. and use his arm sufficiently to assist the nurse; yet previous to the use of the spurious Tractors “ he could no more “ lift his hand from his knee than if a hundred weight “ were upon it, or a nail driven through it;” as he declared in the presence of several gentlemen, whose names I shall have frequent occasion to mention. The fame of this ease brought applications in abundance; indeed, it must be confessed, that it was more than sufficient to act upon weak minds, and induce a belief that these pieces of wood and lead were endowed with some peculiar virtues.

2. ‘ THOMAS ELLIS, a negro, from a chronick rheumatism in his upper and lower extremities, had been incapable of walking without support, or feeding himself

himself, for four months; he came under my care on the 19th of April. At first the Tractors produced no effect upon his thighs, and but little upon his arms. In the course of a few applications, however, he began to move his limbs better, and his nights were not so restless. In the course of this case, the nails, lead, and wood, were used alternately, but there did not appear to be the least difference in the result. Mr. LANGWORTHY, the agent for Mr. PERKINS in this country, usually made use of the patent Tractors for twenty or thirty minutes at a time; but my patients crowded in upon me so fast, that I had not leisure to bestow more than four or five minutes upon each: yet such effects were produced as were almost incredible. It usually happened, that the skin was soon warmer, and occasionally darting pains were produced, which sometimes were troublesome long after the operation, and at others were of shorter duration. He complained, also, that the cicatrix of an old scald upon his arm smarted a great deal. He now began to mend so fast, that he could comb his hair very readily, and on the 29th, in the presence of Dr. LOVELL, and several other gentlemen, he put on his jacket, and walked across the ward without a stick or the least assistance.

‘To those who have not been eye-witnesses to the force of the Imagination, these accounts may appear exaggerated; but they can be too well attested to need any assertions of mine as to their veracity. These things  
were



were not done in a corner, but under the inspection of the faculty of the House, and in the presence of the whole ward.

3. ' With the permission of Dr. Fox, I operated upon JAMES PRIOR, who had been under his care three months with a paralysis of the flexor tendons of both hands. This was certainly a case in which little was to be expected, and I feared would prove a stumbling-block to my reputation. In three minutes, however, (the Tractors having been drawn from the elbow to the wrist) he felt the back of his hand become sensibly warmer; and after four minutes had elapsed, he could actually touch the palm of the hand with the middle finger of his left hand, which he had not been able to effect for more than two months before. The right arm did not appear to be much affected at first, but in a few trials he began to have some power over that also; the left hand was, in the course of a fortnight, so far restored, that he could almost clench his fist; and soon afterwards he left the Hospital. By accident I since met him, when he shewed me, with much pleasure, that he still retained the use of his hand; but the other had relapsed into its former useless state.

4. ' April 20th, I requested Mr. BARTON to operate upon PETER SEWARD, aged 32, who had, for four years, been troubled with pains and weakness in his right arm. From the minutes taken by Mr. LAX, I learnt that he had experienced a good deal of pain during

during the operation. The next day I was assisted by Mr. BERNARD and Mr. LOWE, jun. and as the case is rather curious, I shall copy verbatim the notes written upon the spot. In one minute, “feels the pain coming on at the same place as yesterday; the limb feels warm; pain higher up, and sharper;” in two minutes, “pain increases;” in three and a half, “very acute, darting towards the collar-bone, and begins to give him so much uneasiness that he will not have it done any longer;” perspires profusely, and is gone to bed. It was fortunate for me that the above gentlemen could bear witness to the remarkable effects of the Imagination; it was, notwithstanding, I believe, generally thought in the House that the account was exaggerated. On the 25th, however, in the presence of Messrs. JOLLIFFE, BARTON, GAISFORD, EMERY, and WYLDE, Dr. LOVELL made use of one bit of mahogany, whilst I gently drew down his arm the point of the other. When he sat down “he was perfectly easy.” In a few seconds, “the pain commenced as before;” in two minutes, “it was very acute at the elbow and collar-bone;” in four, “he became very uneasy,” looked very red in the face, “and begged the operation might be discontinued.” His request was complied with, and he immediately went to bed, with a pulse at 120. Three quarters of an hour after (being still in bed) I asked him how he felt himself? He replied, that “he was in more pain than  
“when

“ when the surgeon took five pieces of bone from his leg in a compound fracture, which he unfortunately met with in Wales.” It may, perhaps, be thought that he feigned all this. I cannot assert that he did not; but he could have no point to gain by such a conduct, and he certainly must have been a very excellent minnick to deceive so many people.

“ This case excited much curiosity; and on the 2d of May, Dr. MONCRIEFFE, Messrs. NOBLE, YEATMAN, CLAYFIELD, PROBERT, NOTCUTT, LAX, and JOLLIFFE, were assembled to view the effects produced by these two wonder-working pieces of wood. The man dreaded the operation so much, that he requested to have it done in bed. Mr. CLAYFIELD and myself used the Tractors. In a few seconds, “ a spasm “ was evident upon the *biceps flexor cubiti*,” in two minutes, “ pain in the arm and collar-bone;” in three, “ increased in the hand and arm-pit, and continued “ in pain some time after the operation,” which had considerably accelerated his pulse. This patient could scarcely be prevailed upon to submit any longer to their use, although he confessed that “ upon the “ whole he had received much benefit.”

‘ By this time the affair began to acquire publicity, and many visitors, both out of the profession and medical men, were eye-witnesses, to the effects of these spurious Tractors; and in order to render the trials the more ridiculous, two pieces of bone, of slate-pencil, and



and tobacco-pipes painted, were used occasionally, with the same success. Dr. BEDDOES, to whom I communicated these facts, lent me a pair of the real patent Tractors, for the purpose of trying them when my own failed; but I declare, that in no instance whatever were they used.

5. 'JOHN PEACOCK, a patient of Dr. NEW's, had been afflicted for four months with a weakness of the hip, and severe rheumatick pains, brought on by working in a damp coal-pit. "At first the Tractors occasioned considerable pains, and very restless nights;" (I used his own words) "but after a few trials, he began to sleep unusually well, and had fewer attacks of pain, and appeared confident and happy in the idea that a remedy had been discovered for his complaints." With such a subject, the event may be easily anticipated. This morning he came to thank me for my services, and he was always exceedingly grateful to Mr. BARTON and Mr. GAISFORD, who operated upon him in my absence. I cannot help mentioning one circumstance respecting this man. He came to me one day complaining of a violent settled pain in his forehead, which, he said, "almost distracted him," and requested me to "*draw it out.*" The pieces of mahogany were drawn gently over his forehead for a minute and a half, "when the throbbing began to abate, and in two minutes had nearly ceased." In about three or four minutes the man arose from the chair,

chair, saying, "God bless you, sir; now I am quite "easy." He was attacked with this pain only once afterwards, which affected his vision considerably, but it was removed as easily as in the former instance.

' All these cases turning out so happily, it may be imagined that they are *selected*. I declare, however, that they are the first that occur in the minute-book; and if I could imagine it necessary to add more, there are several remaining, equally successful.

' Mr. LANGWORTHY and myself were fellow-students at St. Thomas's and Guy's Hospitals, in the years 1794-5, and we have occasionally met in Bristol, during his residence as an agent of Mr. PERKINS, at the Wells; but he must excuse me, if I adopt the motto,

"Amicus PLATO, sed magis amica veritas."

' In thus exposing this revival of MESMER's impositions, I do no more than comply with the above-mentioned gentleman's own request. He openly threw down the gauntlet to the faculty, and insidiously begged them to examine "*how the Patent Tractors produced such wonderful effects?*" and very cunningly led the inquirers through the mazes of Galvanism, in hopes of bewildering their judgments.

' It would be as ridiculous in me to call in question the veracity of the accounts published by Mr. PERKINS and others, as it would be unjust to degrade these marvellous pieces of metal (stamped with the magick word *Patent*) below the level of ten-penny nails or tobacco-pipes;

pipes; since there can be no good reason why they should not be all equally efficacious. Let the world then judge between us;—for myself, I declare, that I have neither extenuated, exaggerated, nor set down aught in malice.

‘ The gentlemen whose names I have taken the liberty to insert are well known, and will most assuredly contradict me, if I have advanced any thing but the truth.

‘ I remain, Sir, &c.

‘ RICHARD SMITH.

‘ *Bristol Infirmary, May 16, 1799.*’

The facts above related are sufficient, and more than sufficient, to discredit the supposed virtues of metallick Tractors; but the success of the trials, both at the Bath Hospital and Bristol Infirmary, brought more important objects into view. They prove to a degree which has never been suspected, what powerful influence upon diseases is produced by mere Imagination. Being desirous, that on this interesting subject, the whole evidence should be impartially laid before the publick, I requested the favour of Mr. SMITH to relate the result of his subsequent experiments with fictitious Tractors. He has sent me the following full and instructive report, authenticated by the most respectable witnesses.

*Postscript*

*Postscript to Mr. SMITH'S Letter.*

6. 'EDMUND WILLIAMS applied to me with a *stillicidium urinæ*. The man was a poor feeble subject, and appeared to be impressed with the idea that nothing would be serviceable to him; but he was "willing to try any thing." In one minute after the points of the wooden Tractors had been drawn in various directions about the *pelvis*, he said, "I begin to feel something jumping in my inside;" and in three minutes and a half the determination of blood to the capillary vessels of the skin was evident, "giving him the sensation of warmth, to which he had been a long time a stranger." On the 27th he reported that "his hips had been unusually comfortable and warm;" this induced me to persevere, especially as the patient himself was become less sceptical as to the powers of my Tractors. The gentleman who assisted me having borrowed the pieces of stick, I was obliged to make use of the two ten-penny nails, which (as I have before mentioned) were disguised with red and black sealing-wax, and on that account, had the dignified appellation of *Rouge et Noir*. In fact, it was often necessary to play the part of a necromancer—to describe circles, squares, triangles, and half the figures of geometry, upon the part affected, with the small ends of the Tractors. During all this time we conversed upon the discoveries of FRANKLIN and GAL-

VANI,

VANI, laying much stress upon the power of metallick points attracting even lightning, and conveying it to the earth harmless. To a more curious farce I never was witness; we were almost afraid to look each other in the face, lest an involuntary smile should remove the mask from our countenances, and dispel the charm.

‘ But to return to my patient:—In one minute, “ he “ felt a smarting in his loins, and warmth of his skin;” in two, “ heat increased;” in four, the operation ceased, when he said, “ the skin was very warm.” A by-stander asked him, “ if he thought himself mended?” He replied, “ he would soon answer his question,” and upon sitting down, suddenly exclaimed, “ yes, I am better.” It was demanded, how he knew it? “ When I used to sit down, (said the man) there “ was always a spirt of water thrown from me, but “ now I can prevent it.” The experiment was two or three times repeated, and with the same result; in fact, the patient absolutely regained in a great measure the power of retention afterwards.

‘ It may be asked, what physical alteration could so suddenly have taken place in the fibres of the sphincter muscles, that from a state of pallid relaxation they should again be endowed with the power of performing their office? Permit me, in my turn, to ask the inquirer, what is the *primary cause* of the purple blush which instantaneously overspreads the cheek of the guilty when accused? Should it be answered, because

the vessels are suddenly distended with blood, *that* will be readily granted, as the proximate cause; but it is the *remote power* which directed that operation which I wish to be demonstrated. We shall be equally involved in the same dilemma; but the facts being established, our inability to account for them signifies nothing.

‘ During the month of March he was regularly treated with the pieces of stick, at the end of which time the parts appeared to have recovered much of their healthy tone, and he said that “ he had *more feeling* than before.” I requested him to explain himself. He did so, by telling me, that “ when he first came to me, he could not “ distinguish whether his loins were touched by a metallic or soft substance, but now he could tell me “ readily whether I had a glove on or not.”

7. ‘ The next case which came under my notice was that of BENJAMIN QUARMAN, who had received but little benefit from medicine, having been obliged for some time to hobble upon crutches with much difficulty, and in great pain. He attributed his illness to a violent cold, caught by working in the mud on a pair of dock-gates; I must add, however, that he had been all his life a plumber, which contributed, perhaps, not a little to his indisposition. Upon the first application of the Tractors (which were formed from a piece of bone) to his thigh, he experienced a pricking sensation; in a few minutes he could hardly persuade himself that they did not cut him; at the end of the operation



ration he could use his limb more freely, but complained that "I had driven the pain into his knec." He was under the care of Dr. MONCRIEFFE, who was present when Mr. LAX relieved him, in a few minutes, of a pain which had been for some time fixed in the shoulder-blade. This man continued upon our list until he was under the necessity of leaving the Hospital; but he had no reason to regret the confidence he reposed in us, as he recovered considerably the use of his lower extremities, and was able to comb his hair easily, which the stiffness and pain in his shoulder had heretofore prevented him from doing.

‘ At his departure, QUARMAN was very inquisitive respecting these instruments, and wished much to know whether it were possible to purchase them for less than five guineas, (the price set down in Mr. PERKINS’s pamphlet) as he was convinced a perseverance in their use would completely restore him. He eyed them very wishfully, and I could plainly see that he hoped I would either present them to him, or at least grant him the loan of them. I confess that I was somewhat embarrassed by my situation;—I felt a strong inclination to render him happy, by complying with his wishes, yet the dread of detection obliged me to deprive him of his panacea. A few days since he requested permission to attend as an out-patient, for the purpose of undergoing the operation, with which, of course, I readily complied; indeed, he is so exceedingly

ingly grateful for the benefit he has received, that I could scarcely deny him any thing which would contribute to his comfort.

8. 'THOMAS OSBORNE had been a stout hearty seaman, but returning from the banks of the Nile, was unfortunately shipwrecked in the Colossus, off Scilly. The fatigues he experienced, and the dangers to which he was exposed, had rendered his right leg almost useless; he was, in consequence, discharged the service. He complained chiefly of an intense pain under the knee-pan. Being in the same ward with some of the before-mentioned patients, he was induced to submit to the same operation. This subject complained much of the Tractors cutting him; which idea he had probably deduced from hearing QUARMAN (7.) express himself in that manner. The second application "drew down the pain into his leg." This gave me an opportunity of expressing my determination of "getting it still lower down;" intimating, that "when it was once in his toes, the next operation would free him from it entirely." It unfortunately happened, however, that the pain in his knee returned with great violence during the evening, and he cursed the Tractors as the cause of his accumulated misery. No intreaties could afterwards prevail upon him to make another trial; he said, that "they had tormented him out of one night's rest, and they should do so no more." This was the first check I had experienced, and the reputation



putation of my instruments suffered a little in consequence; as this fellow execrated them as much as they were adored by others.

9. ‘ Nearly about this time I undertook the case of HANNAH WESTON, who had been under the care of Mr. ALLARD, for a disease in the shoulder. About three quarters of a year ago she was attacked with a considerable inflammation in the joint, but the medical plan adopted in all probability prevented the formation of matter. The ligaments had, nevertheless, suffered considerably, and there was but too much reason to suspect that there had been also absorption of the cartilage, followed by a deposit of bone, which rendered the arm immoveable. She had long despaired of recovering its use, and appeared to be reconciled to its loss, complaining only of a violent rheumatick pain, which prevented her from pursuing her ordinary occupation. There certainly was but little to be expected from this patient, and so it turned out. Two pieces of slate-pencil repeatedly relieved her pain, and she has had lately but very few returns of it. She imagines, too, that she can move her arm better; it is clear, however, to an attentive observer, that she moves the collar-bone and shoulder-blade merely, and that the bone of the arm is as fixed in the socket as it was before.

‘ Here, then, we have two cases which did not keep pace with our wishes, but I do not conceive myself at liberty to suppress them on that account; neither will they

they be found to be altogether uninstruative. We can at least deduce from them a proof, that the same causes, in different constitutions, will produce very different effects; for no man surely can believe that the speeifick difference of the substances employed could vary the results so widely. It will prove to us, besides, that there are certain bounds to the powers even of the Imagination over the animal œconomy; and in the case in question we have seen, that although it may be equal to the prevention of periodical pain, it was incapable of stimulating the lymphaticks to a removal of the newly-formed bone, or of restoring tone to the ligaments.

10. “ On the 24th of May, happening by chance to visit the physick-wards with Mr. DYER, a patient of Dr. NEW’s complained of great stiffness and occasional pain in the shoulder. I requested permission to attempt his relief by the new operation. In consequence, Mr. GAISFORD began to treat him in the usual manner with the pieces of pencil. In a few minutes he was seized with a tremor in his limb, and so violent a shivering fit, that it was judged prudent to desist for the present. The next day I wished to repeat the trial, but he positively refused; alleging that his arm was quite well, and therefore it would be putting him to useless pain. It is worthy remark, that this man’s countenance betrayed very evident symptoms of apprehension; and it was the general opinion of the bystanders, that the dread of experiencing a second time

so severe a discipline induced him to make use of his arm so freely.

‘ This case bears a striking resemblance to PETER SEWARD’S; both wonderfully depicting the powers of the Imagination. Had these effects followed the use of the Patent Tractors, it would have been termed *metallick influence*, and would have been considered as resulting from their mysterious combination of metals.’

*Extract of a Letter from Mr. SMITH, May 5, 1801.*

‘ As a SUPPLEMENT to the letters written to you upon Perkinism, I have to add, that in consequence of the proprietors of the Patent Tractors having shielded themselves under the assertions of wonderful cures performed upon infants and horses, I have made trial of the former, and I could not discover that they were in the slightest degree beneficial or prejudicial, or that they produced any effect whatever.

‘ In order to obtain evidence upon the second head, the genuine instruments were placed in the hands of Mr. PEALL, late a proprietor of the Horse Infirmary in this city, now appointed to the chair as Veterinarian Professor of the College of Dublin; and after a course of experiments, in which he was assisted by Mr. BRITTAIN, his present successor, I was assured by both, that the animals did not evince the smallest alteration for the better or the worse; and that, like infants, being beyond the power of Imagination, the gentlemen

men were convinced, that in the disorders of horses these pieces of brass and iron were perfectly inert.\*

### REMARKS.

Thus our inquiries, which were very successfully instituted at the Bath General Hospital, have been amply confirmed in the Bristol Infirmary by Mr. SMITH, and other most respectable witnesses, and in the Infirmary at Hull by Dr. ALDERSON. The whole constitutes a body of evidence, which, in several points of view, affords very important instruction.

\* In addition to the evidence here adduced, I beg leave to refer the intelligent reader to some excellent experiments made with fictitious Tractors by Dr. ALDERSON, in the Infirmary at Hull, before medical witnesses, which amply confirm the facts and conclusions stated in these pages.

*“ To the Editors of the Medical and Physical Journal.*

“ GENTLEMEN,

“ You have given ample room to the effects of Digitalis, and communicated much useful information on the subject of the Cow-Pox, the happiest discovery of the present age; will you allow a little room in your valuable publication for the following cases of the efficacy of Tractors?

“ Having furnished my ingenious friend Mr. BIRON, house-apothecary to the General Infirmary here, with a pair of Tractors, he lost no time in making the experiments; the result of which, I will detail in his own words.

“ ROBERT WOOD, aged sixty-seven, on June 4th was operated upon with Tractors, for a rheumatick affection of his hip, which he has had for these eight months. During the application of  
the

The doctrine of Perkinism has been honoured by so many proselytes in America, England, and the continent of Europe, (even by some of the medical profession) that the question might, of itself, merit publick discussion. But I should not have been disposed to

the Tractors, which was continued for seven minutes, no effects were produced, except a profuse perspiration and a general tremor. On ceasing the application of the Tractors, to his inexpressible joy, and our satisfaction, the good effects of our labour were now produced and acknowledged; for he voluntarily assured us that he could walk with perfect ease, that he had the entire motion of the joint, and that he was free from pain. To use his own words, "As to the pain I have now, I do not care if I have it all my life; that will matter nothing; you may take your medicines, I'll have no more of them; these are the things for me." And prior to his leaving the Infirmary, he remarked how very warm those parts were, where the Tractors had been applied, and then walked from the Infirmary to his own house, assuring his companion, Bowson, that he could very well walk to Beverley. June 5th, walked to the Infirmary this morning with very trifling difficulty; was so much pleased with the relief, or rather cure, obtained yesterday, that, to use his own words again, he had very joyfully spread abroad the intelligence to his acquaintance. Has had some return of pain this morning, which, however, was removed by another application; and when asked how he felt, declared, "as bonny as augh," and then marched off, with a countenance expressive of his gratitude for the wonderful relief he had obtained.

"ROBERT BOWSER, aged thirty-seven. June 4th, Pain and weakness in his right arm, which he has had for some months; after applying the Tractors one minute and a half, feels less pain, 2', heat; 4', pain much increased; 5', compared the Tractors to red hot needles; the application of the Tractors was continued four minutes longer; as the pain increased, so did the heat to a violent degree. On moving the arm after the operation, he assured

publish a refutation of an error which would probably be temporary, if the experiments above recited had not appeared to warrant still more useful and general conclusions.

I will not affront the good sense of the reader by supposing that any apology can be required for the very

sured us he was very greatly relieved. 5th, His pain has lessened very considerably since yesterday, but moves his arm yet with difficulty. 6th, He returned home yesterday, and says, he slept for near three hours, when he was suddenly awoke by a violent burning heat in his arm, in such directions as the Tractors, after which he was much better.

“ANN HILL, aged fifty-seven. Pain in her right arm and shoulder, which she has had for nine months; the Tractors were applied one minute and a half, when she perceived an increase of warmth on the part; 3', the pain removed from the shoulder to the elbow; 5', she suddenly exclaimed that she was now cured of the worst pain. “Bless me! why, who could have thought it, that them little things cou'd pull the pain from one? Well, to be sure, the longer one lives, the more one sees; ah dear! Well, thank God, I hope I shall be able to wash again, and earn a bit of bread; well, I can get my gown on now, in the morning I cou'd not, if it had been ever so; well, gentlemen, I return you many thanks; I reckon you'll do me again, and then you'll pull it all out.” June 5th, Had pain in the shoulder once last night, but since then it has been chiefly near the elbow. The Tractors were applied as before, a greater warmth was produced in the part than before. 6th, She assures us the pain is now trifling, and complains only of weakness in the part. 8th, As she is now free from pain, wishes to return thanks.

“JOHN SMITH, aged thirty-nine. Pain in the knee, ankle, and foot. June 10th, the Tractors were applied one minute and a half, when a general warmth was very evident; 2', much less pain; 3', the Tractors carry heat with them wherever they go. His feet, prior to the application, were always cold, now agreeably



innocent contrivance here practised, by inspiring a patient with the cheering affection of hope, and by slightly touching the skin with a piece of wood, in order to perform so important a professional duty as to discriminate true from false remedies.

ably warm; in six minutes he assured us he could walk with greater ease than he had done for three months; and to convince us how greatly he was relieved, he repeatedly, with great violence, struck his feet against the tables and chairs. June 12th, the pain is much relieved, but the soreness in the soles of the feet still remains; 2', much warmth wherever the Tractors are carried; 3', Do you think yourself much relieved? "Relieved! sir, I believe I am; why, I am quite a new man from what I was." June 13, no pain in the knees or ankles, a trifling stiffness in the hip-joint, which was removed by applying the Tractors round the joint for five minutes only.

"THOMAS JONES, aged seventy. Pain in the hand and arm; with some difficulty he was able to move the fingers, June 13. As WOOD and SMITH were with this man previous to the operation, and had acquainted him with the wonderful efficacy of these Tractors producing warmth wherever carried, and immediately removing, or wonderfully lessening, the pain, I concluded that the same effects would be produced of course upon his arm. I determined to try if we could not produce a contrary effect; I told him I thought his case differed very materially from common rheumatism, and that a case of that kind was never immediately relieved by the application of the Tractors; on the contrary, that the pain was frequently increased for some hours, and that no additional warmth was perceived in the part, and that generally the patient slept ill the greater part of the first night, but that in the morning the good effects would soon be discovered. After applying the Tractors five minutes, he assured me that the pain was considerably increased; before he left the Infirmary, the pain was so violent, that he was unable to move his arm. June 14th, "You are a mere prophet, sir; never did a poor devil spend

When the event of our inquiries at the Bath Hospital was first communicated to the enthusiastick believers in the efficacy of the Metallick Tractors, the intelligence excited great commotions, accompanied with threats and abuse. A counter-declaration was to be signed by a great number of very respectable persons; but I felt much reluctance to provoke them to record their names as dupes of a popular delusion, by which they might be exposed to ridicule through life. By a little delay, all such apprehensions appear to be effectually obviated.

The influence of the passions upon disorders of the body has been excellently illustrated by physicians of superior understanding; as Sir GEORGE BAKER, Dr. FALCONER, and others. The experiments above re-

spend such a night; I tossed and tumbled about till five o'clock, in such pain, and then I got such nice sleep, and I have been easier ever since; you'll cure me; and if you do, I'll remember you, for I have a good shot, and they say there's plenty of birds." The Tractors were applied again, when the additional warmth was produced, as in the other cases, and some trifling diminution of pain.

"I am, Gentlemen, your's, &c.

"JAMES ALDERSON, M. D.

"*Hull, June 19, 1800.*"

"P. S. I shall make no comments. The Tractors were made of two pieces of wood, and covered, the one with red, and the other with black sealing-wax, and carefully kept in cotton, &c. I have shewn the patients to the whole faculty of the house, to whose interrogations they have answered as here detailed, and I have this day seen them return thanks at the Board of Trustees."

lated



lated strongly confirm, and even extend, our knowledge on this subject. As many of the effects may appear wonderful, they required to be supported by the most respectable testimony. And none will deny that the witnesses here produced are sufficiently numerous, impartial, and intelligent.

But the reports above related may appear to some readers so very marvellous, as to require confirmation by analagous facts.

‘ During the famous siege of Breda in 1625, the garrison was afflicted with the scurvy in a most dreadful degree. When the Prince of Orange heard of their distress, and understood that the city was in danger of being delivered up to the enemy by the soldiers, he wrote letters addressed to the men, promising them the most speedy relief. These were accompanied with medicines against the scurvy, said to be of great price, but still of greater efficacy: many more were yet to be sent them. The effects of this deceit were truly astonishing! three small phials of medicine were given to each physician, not enough for the recovery of two patients. It was publicly given out, that three or four drops were sufficient to impart a healing virtue to a gallon of liquor. We now displayed our wonder-working balsams; nor were even the commanders let into the secret of the cheat put upon the soldiers. They flocked in crouds about us, every one soliciting that part may be reserved for their use. Cheerfulness again appears on every countenance,

countenance, and an universal faith prevails in the sovereign virtues of the remedies. The herbs now beginning to spring up above the ground, we of these make decoctions, to which wormwood and camphor were added, that by the prevalent flavour of those, they might appear medicines of no mean efficacy. The stiff contracted limbs were anointed with wax melted in rapeseed or linseed oil. The invention of new and untried physick is boasted; and amidst a defect of every necessary and useful medicine, a strange medley of drugs was compounded. The effect, however, of the delusion was really astonishing; for many were quickly and perfectly recovered. Such as had not moved their limbs for a month before, were seen walking the streets sound, strait, and whole. They boasted of their cure by the Prince's remedy; the motion of their joints being restored by a simple friction with oil; and the belly now of itself well performing its office, or at least with a small assistance from medicine. Many who declared they had been rendered worse by all former remedies administered, recovered in a few days, to their inexpressible joy, and the no less general surprise, by their taking (almost by their having brought to them) what we affirmed to them to be their gracious Prince's cure.'

Dr. LIND, from whose Treatise on the Scurvy this passage is taken, observes, that 'It is given us by an eye-witness,\* an author of great candour and veracity,

\* Frederic Vander Mye, de morbis et symptomatibus popularibus Bredanis, tempore obsidionis.

who

who (as he informs us) wrote down every day the state of his patients; and seems more to be surprised with their unexpected recovery, than he possibly would have been, had he formerly been better acquainted with the nature of this surprising malady. The facts were then also notoriously known to many, at the time when he published his book, viz. the second year after they happened.'

This excellent physician remarks, that 'an important lesson in physick is here to be learned, viz. the wonderful and powerful influence of the passions of the mind upon the state and disorders of the body. This is too often overlooked in the cure of diseases; many of which are sometimes attempted by the sole mechanical operation of drugs, without calling in to assistance the strong powers of Imagination, or the concurring influences of the soul. Hence it is, that the same remedy will not always produce the like effect, even in the same person, when given by different hands.'

The 4th, 8th, and 10th cases, related by Mr. SMITH, though less successful, are not less instructive than the rest. They prove (what should be well understood) that the Imagination can cause, as well as cure, diseases of the body. They clearly establish one rule of medical practice which has always appeared to me highly important. In the best manner possible a patient ought to be always inspired with confidence in any remedy which is administered. But if a favourable opinion of it  
can

can not be obtained, and especially if there be a marked prejudice against it, another, though a less powerful, medicine, ought to be preferred. This rule of medical conduct derives ample confirmation from the facts above related.

I have long been aware of the great importance of medical faith. Daily experience has constantly confirmed and increased my opinion of its efficacy. On numerous occasions I have declared, that I never wished to have a patient who did not possess a sufficient portion of it. These trials place its efficacy in such a conspicuous point of view, as must even astonish persons who have particularly attended to this subject; they clearly prove what wonderful effects the passions of hope and faith, excited by mere Imagination, can produce upon diseases.

On this principle we may account for the marvellous recoveries frequently ascribed to empiric remedies, which are commonly inert drugs, and generally applied by the ignorant patient in disorders totally different from what the quack himself pretends that they can cure. Magnificent and unqualified promises inspire weak minds with implicit confidence.

I have sometimes observed that the administration of a new medicine, even when its composition was known, if recommended to the publick with exalted praise, has been attended with great success—much greater than what was confirmed by future experience.

Hence

Hence we may discern the great advantage of medical reputation. This explains what has been frequently observed, that the same remedy will produce more beneficial effects when prescribed by a famous Physician, than by a person of inferior character. In cases which have appeared to me desperate, but where the patient possessed implicit faith, I have seen very astonishing success; and have ascribed the recovery full as much to the influence of hope and great confidence, as to the medicinal quality of the drug. It is extremely fortunate, when the most powerful remedies of both body and mind unite their power to alleviate or remove a disease.

Physicians of good understanding, but of various dispositions of mind, feel different degrees of scepticism in the remedies they employ. One who possesses, with discernment, the largest portion of medical faith, will undoubtedly be of greatest benefit to his patients. None but the ignorant can suppose that feigned or fictitious assurances of the virtues of a medicine will answer the same purpose. The language of self-conviction is undoubtedly the most persuasive. One must speak what he feels,

“*Si curat cor spectantis tetigisse.*”

He should not express confidence to a patient which he does not possess, but he should express it with pathetic energy:

“*Format enim natura prius nos intus ad omnem*

“*Fortunarum habitum.*”

IN

In an irritable state of mind, strongly agitated between hope and fear, the words and looks of a medical friend, when they correspond with each other, have a very powerful and salutary influence:

“Post effert animi motus, interprete lingua.”

HOR.

# ADDITIONS

## TO THE

### SECOND EDITION.

**B**EING very reluctant to engage in any public disquisition, I did not at first think it necessary to print the cases in my possession, which so clearly prove the influence of fictitious Tractors upon disorders of the body. Believing that the delusion was only local, and would be temporary, the first edition of this pamphlet was delayed, on that consideration, for many months. But the numerous witnesses,\* of some rank in the

\* As an *apology* for printing a new edition of this little pamphlet, it may be proper to insert a sentence from a copious advertisement of Mr. PERKINS, circulated monthly with the magazines, journals, &c. “Of the nature of the evidence of the salutary effects of the” patent “Tractors, an idea will be formed, from a bare mention that among the vouchers, whose names are adduced in his two last publications, are eight professors in four universities, in the various branches, as follows:—three of Natural Philosophy; four of Medicine; one of Natural History. To these may be added nineteen regular physicians; seventeen surgeons; twenty clergymen, ten of whom are doctors in divinity; and many other characters of equal respectability.”

world,



world, whose testimony Mr. PERKINS has adduced in his late publications, even in England, but much more in America, and on the continent of Europe, evince, beyond all doubt, that my attention has been employed upon a subject of some importance. If these witnesses have not been grossly deceived, one feeble voice, though so respectably supported, can have no avail. Such opposition, if not founded upon truth, cannot for a moment check so impetuous a torrent of opinion.

One circumstance is too remarkable to be omitted. Before January 1799 the patent Tractors were said to have performed the most incredible cures in Bath. Exaggerated stories of their power were reported in every company. At that time, the experiments with the fictitious Tractors were performed in the Bath Hospital. Since that date, I have only heard of a single cure performed by them in this city, and by a person who cannot be supposed capable of forming an accurate opinion upon a medical question. But during the same period, the efficacy of the patent Tractors has increased to an astonishing degree in other places. The most marvellous stories in the late publications on this subject have occurred since January 1799.

Another circumstance merits attention. An enthusiastick dupe of this doctrine can perform cures with incomparably greater success than the most skilful physician or surgeon, with the aid of the most pompous figures of geometry which can be described, or fictitious



tious stories which can be related. Genuine enthusiasm is wonderfully infectious.

It is hardly worth notice that Mr. PERKINS, in his late publications, has bestowed upon my very ingenious coadjutor Mr. SMITH, much illiberal abuse, and many false accusations. No intelligent reader will require to be told that the experiments which he performed in the Bristol Infirmary with uncommon judgment and address, are highly honourable to his professional character. A large proportion of the most respectable physicians and surgeons of that city, with much candour and liberality became his associates and assistants in these interesting and instructive researches, in a manner which claims not only mine, but publick gratitude. Without such clear, full, and undoubted testimony, this piece of Legerdemain could not have been so soon and so effectually exploded. If Mr. SMITH be thought to deserve opprobrious names, the other physicians and surgeons of Bristol, of Bath, and Hull, are equally intitled to the same kind of abuse.

There is only one plain question for the reader's determination. Have the patent, or the fictitious, Tractors produced the greatest effects, in proportion to the number of experiments which have been tried by each of them as proved by the best evidence?

In the Bath Hospital, five cases of obstinate chronick rheumatism were selected. The operation of slightly touching the skin was only once performed, and for a

few

few minutes: yet four of the patients were instantly, and three remarkably, relieved by this insignificant process. The next day, the same patients were, with similar effects, touched with the metallick Tractors.

These facts were authenticated on the former day by four, and on the latter by five, intelligent and impartial medical witnesses, in the presence of the patients, and of each other.

In the Bristol Infirmary, ten very proper cases were selected. In *all* of them wonderful effects were produced by fictitious Tractors, which, from day to day, for a considerable time, were assiduously and judiciously employed. In most of the cases pain was relieved or entirely removed; in some it was increased to a marvellous degree. It was curious to observe how these effects were progressively increased by each successive application.

This astonishing power of the Imagination was evinced by the unanimous testimony of four physicians and fifteen surgeons and philosophical spectators. The intelligent reader must receive perfect conviction as to the authenticity of these very extraordinary facts from the superior knowledge, number, and impartiality of the witnesses.

The facts here related are amply confirmed by the unsolicited and instructive cases published by Dr. ALDERSON above quoted.

Mark the striking contrast of this statement in regard to the patent metallick Tractors. The cases pub-

lished to support this empirical remedy are not taken indiscriminately and in succession, stating the whole evidence; but a few comparatively are selected out of a great multitude of cases, in which no effect whatsoever was produced. In this country, none but a few slight and insignificant cures are related on the testimony of medical witnesses. Such considerations will have great weight with every reader who is capable of judging for himself.

If the metallick Tractors can produce instant and visible effects in the presence of an intelligent and impartial observer, medical witnesses will undoubtedly become their firmest and most strenuous friends. The heartfelt joy of giving relief to a suffering patient is the most delightful solace of the innumerable anxieties and fatigues inseparable from the medical profession. I will engage for my brethren that they will reject no remedy of whose salutary efficacy they can obtain clear conviction, from whatever quarter it may come. And if metallick Tractors can produce effects so much superior to all other remedies, the testimony of medical witnesses will be given with candour and alacrity.

There is an erroneous opinion which too generally prevails, that the medical profession is unreasonably prejudiced against quacks. During the last century, though the most enlightened of any since the creation, let us recollect how many quack medicines have annually appeared, and, for a time, have been supposed

to perform incredible cures. Of the many myriads which like meteors have shone and vanished, not one in many thousands has stood the test of experience. Yet it is well known, that whenever any of these transitory visions has suggested a single good quality preferable to other known remedies, it has always been carefully preserved as a valuable acquisition to medical science. Such considerations justly make men of discernment cautious in believing any magnificent and interested promises, and ought to preserve the unthinking multitude from the shameful delusion which continues to be practised with astonishing success.

The proselytes of Perkinism, having been driven from every other argument by the superior efficacy and evidence of fictitious Tractors, have, as a last resource, alleged that the patent metallick Tractors have removed the disorders of infants and horses. Even this flimsy pretence is capable of a satisfactory refutation.

On the authority of Dr. FALCONER, the following marvellous instance of delusion is related. It is the completest example of the power of the Imagination which can possibly be produced.

‘ A Lady informed me that a Lady of her acquaintance, who had great faith in the efficacy of the Tractors, on seeing a small ecchymosis, about the size of a silver penny, at the corner of the eye, desired to try on it the effects of her favourite remedy. The Lady who was intended to be the subject of the trial con-

‘ sented

‘ sented, and the other Lady produced the instruments;  
‘ and after drawing them four or five times over the  
‘ spot, declared, that “ *it changed to a paler colour,*”  
‘ and on repeating the use of them a few minutes  
‘ longer, that “ *it had almost vanished, and was*  
“ *scarcely visible,*” and departed in high triumph at  
‘ her success. I was assured by the Lady that under-  
‘ went the operation, that she “ *looked in the glass*  
“ *immediately after, and that not the least visible*  
“ *alteration had taken place.*”

### REMARKS.

The sight is the most perfect of our senses, and least liable to error. When an object is placed before the eyes, its size and colour can be determined with a degree of certainty and an intuitive conviction which one would judge impossible to be deceived. Such perceptions are fully open to the comprehension of the most illiterate peasant, and even the wildest savage upon earth. Yet so powerful is the influence of enthusiasm, in this instance, as to deprive a person who had a very good understanding, improved by a superior education, of that faculty of discernment which is possessed by the whole human race.

If the delusions of the Imagination are so wonderful in clear and plain objects of sight, it can be no matter of surprise that an enthusiast should be deceived in re-  
gard

gard to the effect of remedies for the diseases of infants and horses. In these cases, it is not the *patient*, but the *observer*, who is deceived by his own Imagination. Every reader of discernment will comprehend, and acknowledge, the propriety of this distinction.

It will be unnecessary farther to explain what is so obvious.

But effects are ascribed to *Perkinism* incomparably more incredible than its supposed influence on the diseases of infants and horses. In the late publications, true proselytes assert with positive solemnity, that tumors, inflammations, blisters, &c. have *instantly* vanished before the sight of the beholder, by the mere metallick touch. Such facts are so contrary to all experience, and indeed to common sense, as to be utterly disbelieved by every person of discernment. They only prove the blind credulity of the reporter. Such a power is incomparably greater than has hitherto been discovered by man. It is supernatural and incredible. Witnesses like these prove too much, and therefore, as logicians justly conclude, prove nothing. It requires more than a common portion of candour not to suspect that false witnesses might have been suborned to support the falling credit of this remedy. But the excellent illustration of this interesting question by the above fact, related upon the undoubted testimony of Dr. FALCONER'S friend, places their evidence in a less blameable, and perhaps in a more true and just, light.

These



These witnesses may possibly have been only dupes, not impostors.

When witchcraft was the popular creed, so general was the delusion that the suspected witches believed and confessed themselves possessed of this supernatural power, though death was the consequence of such confession.

The errors of *Perkinism* have spread in a most wonderful manner, not only in America but in Europe, particularly in Denmark. Even the medical professors of this learned nation have endeavoured to support the credit of this new empiricism by their experiments and publications. The following extract from the "*Mercure de France*," published at Paris, will prove how effectually the experiments fairly tried and faithfully reported of the efficacy of fictitious Tractors at Bath and at Bristol, have corrected this widely-spread error in France and in Germany, and perhaps in Denmark.

\* Parmi les expériences curieuses sur l'imagination, faites dans la vue de prouver l'influence de cette fa-

\* ' Among all the curious experiments upon the Imagination which have been performed, with an intention to prove the influence of that faculty upon the animal economy, none has answered this purpose more successfully than those which *Perkinism* has suggested.

' In No. 22 of the *Medical and Chirurgical German Library* we find a very interesting article upon this subject. We shall give an extract of it; and in taking cognizance of what has been performed by *Perkinism*, most readers will involuntarily recollect *Mesmerism*.

' Dr. PERKINS, a physician of Plainfield in North-America, who has given his name to this new kind of Legerdemain, pre-  
' tended

culté sur l'économie animale, il n'en est point qui le soient davantage que celles auxquels le *Perkinisme* a donné lieu. On trouve, dans le No. 22 de la *Bibliothèque Germanique Medico-Chirurgicale*, un article

' tended to have discovered an efficacious remedy against the  
' gout, rheumatism, and other diseases, by simply touching the  
' affected parts with two metallick needles, rounded at one end,  
' and pointed at the other, a quarter of an inch in diameter, at  
' the upper part, and four inches in length. One is yellow,  
' and the other of a dark blue colour. The Government of the  
' United States of America, thinking that they ought to encourage this discovery, has granted a patent to the author of it,  
' which gives him the privilege exclusively of selling these instruments at the price of twenty-five crowns a pair. These  
' Needles were brought from America into Europe, and have  
' been favourably received in the North, particularly in Denmark.  
' They have also acquired some reputation in England; particularly at Bath, where they performed greater cures than the  
' waters. All the patients became desirous to be touched by these  
' Needles of Perkins; they were touched, and were cured.

' Dr. HAYGARTH, endowed with a very enlightened and very  
' comprehensive mind for observation, and inspired with zeal for  
' the advancement of every thing which could be conducive to  
' the benefit of mankind, proposed to a very learned physician  
' of that city, Dr. FALCONER, to take advantage of this favourable opinion, in order to make a practical course of experiments  
' on the Imagination. In consequence, these physicians, supporting, with all their authority, the confidence already acquired by these Needles, touched such patients as were judged  
' proper for the purpose; only instead of metallick needles, of  
' five guineas a pair, they employed needles of lead, wood, iron,  
' bone, &c. imitating the shape and colour, very exactly, of the  
' well-known originals. They equally succeeded in performing  
' the most astonishing cures. In the work itself ought to be read  
' the curious and circumstantial details, which are related in such  
' a manner as not to leave in the mind any doubt of the real truth.'

très

très intéressant sur ce sujet: en voici l'extrait, et en prenant connaissance de ce qu'on va lire sur le Perkinisme, plus d'un lecteur se souviendra involontairement du *Mesmerisme*.

“ PERKINS, médecin de Plainfield dans l'Amerique Septentrionale, qui a donné son nom a cette nouvelle jonglerie, a prétendu avoir trouvé un remède efficace contre la goutte, le rhumatisme, et autres maladies, dans le simple attouchement des parties souffrantes, pratiqué au moyen de deux aiguilles de métal, arrondées en haut, pointues vers le bas, d'un quart du pouce de diamètre à leur partie supérieure, et de quatre pouces de longueur. L'une est jaune, et l'autre a un lustre blanc bleuâtre. Le Gouvernement des Etats-Unis, croyant devoir favoriser cette découverte, a fait délivrer à son auteur une patente, en vertu de laquelle il doit jouir pendant quatorze ans, du privilege exclusif de la vente des instruments, qu'il ne cede pas a moins de vingt-cinq ceus pièce. Ces aiguilles ont passées de l'Amerique en Europe, et ont fait fortunes dans le Nord et surtout en Danemark. Elles ont aussi acquises quelque célébrité en Angleterre; et dernièrement à Bath elles operaient plus de guérisons que les eaux. Tous les malades voulaient être touchés par des aiguilles de Perkins; on les touchait, et ils étoient guéris.

“ Le docteur *Haygarth*, doué d'un esprit d'observation très éclairé et très étendu, et rempli de zèle pour l'avancement de tout ce qui peut contribuer au bien de l'humanité,

l'humanité, proposa à un habile medecin de cette ville, le docteur *Falconer*, de profiter de cette opinion accréditée, pour faire un cours pratique sur l'imagination. En consequence ce médecin, appuyant de toute son autorité la confiance déjà acquise aux aiguilles, a touché tous les malades qui se sont présentés. Seulement à la place des aiguilles merveilleuses et de vingt-cinq écus pièce, il s'est servi, en contre façon, et en ayant soin d'imiter à l'extérieur, tres exactement, les modèles connus, d'aiguilles de plomb, de bois, de fer, d'os, &c. ; et il a également reussi, bien veritablement reussi à opérer les cures les plus surprenantes. Il faut en lire dans l'ouvrage les détails curieux circonstanciés, et constatés de maniere à ne laisser dans l'esprit aucun doute sur leur realité."

## §. II.

## EPIDEMICAL CONVULSIONS.

FROM some of the facts above detailed it appears, that when one case had made an unfavourable impression, others follow, by imitation, sympathy, or some other affection of the Imagination, which is not generally known, nor sufficiently suspected. This interesting but obscure subject will be illustrated, in the best manner, by a short history of Epidemical Convulsions, which lately appeared in Anglesey, North-Wales. It chiefly affected the tenants of the Earl of UXBRIDGE and HOLLAND GRIFFITH, Esq. For this alarming malady I was consulted about three years ago. The words of my very intelligent correspondent, with brief remarks, will explain the nature of this distemper, and suggest the best means of checking this and similar calamities.

*Extract of a Letter from HOLLAND GRIFFITH, esq.*

‘ *Berw, Anglesey, Sept. 23, 1796.* I beg leave to offer to your most serious consideration a malady, which, within these two months, has for the first time been prevalent in this neighbourhood, and which is, I believe,

lieve, perfectly new in this country; never having been before remembered, as I am well informed, by the oldest inhabitants.

‘ The first symptom of this disorder is a pain of the head, and sometimes of the stomach and side, not very violent; succeeded by an alarming catching or convulsion in the upper extremity, resembling St. Vitus’s dance; the pulse moderate, the body costive. In bed, the disorder is not so violent. The patients are pretty well in health, notwithstanding their great agitation of body, which continues with little intermission, causing the shoulders almost to meet by the exertion.

‘ Yesterday I saw one of these unfortunate people for the first time; and being informed that several were affected in like manner in this neighbourhood, I assembled them together this morning, in number ten, and sent for an apothecary to meet them. A sight so shocking I never before beheld. He took from each of them about eight ounces of blood, which appeared in a dissolved state.

‘ It appears to me extraordinary, that the disorder is confined to this neighbourhood alone, and only affects females from ten to twenty-five years old. This situation is low and marshy, but the marsh has been in some degree drained of late years, although not effectually; but I conceive the damps not so powerful as heretofore. My great desire is to relieve, if possible, these poor and unfortunate people, and I trust in GOD that, with  
your



your advice, I shall again see them reinstated; that you may live many years to be a comfort to the distressed, is my earnest wish. I shall be extremely obliged to you, if you will favour me with your opinion, what you apprehend to be the cause of this complaint.'

In my answer to Mr. GRIFFITH I explained to him, that above thirty years ago an epidemical distemper, of the nervous or hysterical kind, had spread through the shire of Angus in Scotland, and that I had seen one of these patients in the Edinburgh Infirmary; that nervous disorders are very liable to be communicated. Thus, we all know that yawning is caught from one person to another. In like manner, hysterick fits (as I have seen) frequently spread in hospitals. In the Edinburgh Infirmary, as I was a witness, an hysterical patient infected three or four other girls in the same ward. When one of them was attacked, I have seen the rest fall down in succession into convulsions.\* For this reason, I proposed a rule, which was adopted in the Chester Infirmary, to exclude all convulsive disorders from the women's wards.

On these considerations, I desired Mr GRIFFITH to institute very minute inquiries in what manner some of the first Anglesey patients were attacked; and particularly whether they had not had such an intercourse with each other as to warrant a suspicion that the epidemick had spread by a kind of infection.

\* A similar fact occurred to Dr. FALCONER, at Buxton. See his Dissertation on the Passions, p. 110.

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With this idea of the cause of these epidemical convulsions, I could have wished to concert some plan of cure which might make a salutary impression upon the Imagination; but being situated at near eighty miles distance from my correspondent and my patients, no measures of that kind could be attempted. I could not do better than order some anti-spasmodick medicines, and to desire Mr. GRIFFITH to use all his authority to prevent girls and young women from having any communication with persons affected with these convulsions, and to keep those who were ill of the distemper separate from each other as much as possible. I warned him, that if these cautions were not observed, the epidemick might spread through the whole island of Anglesey.

The following accurate and judicious detail clearly explains and confirms this opinion.

*Extracts from Mr. GRIFFITH's Answers.*

‘ *October 7th, 1796.* Several of the patients have been here since I received your prescription, and I have minutely examined them, according to your directions.

‘ *1st and 2d Cases.* MARGARET WILLIAMS, a girl of thirteen years of age, was seized with a pain in her head on a Sunday evening about ten weeks ago. On the Wednesday following, a convulsion in the upper extremities came on, which has continued ever since. When the convulsion is most violent, she becomes moidered.

moidered, and in some degree loses her recollection. Her legs are very feeble, but not convulsed. She has the spasms while asleep, as she is told, but they never awaken her. She was affected about a fortnight, *when a sister of hers, who lives in the same house, was attacked in like manner.* They were sent to a town to experience electricity, by which, and some medicines, the sister recovered, but the girl in question was not much relieved. In a short time, her disorder returned as alarmingly as ever. Her stomach is a good deal swelled. She cannot ascribe her complaint to any particular cause.

‘ 3d. CATHARINE PETERS was seized with a tremor at her heart, as she was washing linen. She was, for a time, deprived of breath. A convulsion came on, succeeded by fainting fits. *She had seen the first patient, while in her convulsed state.* She was rather alarmed at the appearance of the first patient; the only one, I believe, whom she saw in that state. Her age twenty-one.

‘ 4th. HELEN THOMAS, while making hay, was taken suddenly ill. She was soon after seized with convulsions. She lost her hearing and recollection; was seized with a giddiness. *She had been much affected by the first patient.* The above girls had accidental communication with the first patient only.

‘ The number of girls who have been attacked are eighteen. Two only are recovered. All of them, as  
far

far as I can understand, were taken much in the same manner with the first three. Their lower extremities are free from spasms, although they find themselves considerably relaxed. The least alarm throws them into a shaking fit. They have, in general, a hiecup. The anxiety of parents, sisters, brothers, friends, &c. for their recovery, is particularly obvious in this neighbourhood.

‘*Oct. 8th.* I detained my letter until now, in order to give you some account of the operation of the essential oil, &c. which was given to the poor girls on Tuesday last, with wonderful success; for all who took the drops have uniformly experienced the good effects of them.’

‘*Jan. 18th, 1797.* I have no doubt of the truth of your observation relative to the contagious quality of this disorder.’

‘*Oct. 9th, 1799.* The whole number affected with these epidemical convulsions was twenty-four, all females, except one boy of seventeen years of age. *They had all intercourse with each other.* They are all considered as cured; yet two or three of them are susceptible of the least fright or sudden alarm, which brings on the convulsions in a slight degree, and of short duration.’

## OBSERVATIONS.

This subject is but imperfectly understood, and an useful Dissertation might be written on the diseases which are caused by powerful affections of the Imagination, if all the facts recorded by medical authors were stated, and compared with each other. But I am more disposed, and have had better opportunities, to delineate from Nature than from books. However, a few hints to illustrate this interesting inquiry, with references to the reader, who may wish more accurately to investigate the question, can be briefly stated.

1. It is universally known, that convulsive disorders are communicated to persons who live in the same house or apartment. Remarkable cases of this kind are related by KAAU BOERHAAVE;\* by the Commissioners of Paris,† who enquired into the power of animal magnetism; and by Sir GEORGE BAKER.‡

2. In like manner, convulsions in some instances are communicated from house to house, and become epidemical, by the intimate intercourse of persons in the same neighbourhood; probably by seeing the distressed patients, by hearing their alarming shrieks, and listening to an account of their sufferings, feelingly and

\* Impetum faciens, c. ix. 406.

† See the Report of the Commissioners.

‡ See Medical Transactions, t. iii. xi.

frightfully

frightfully described. Of this kind of convulsive epidemics may be reckoned that which afflicted the female inhabitants in the shire of Angus in Scotland, about the year 1763 or 1764, above-mentioned. A like nervous distemper appears to have visited various parts of Germany about the year 1717.\* The famous epidemick of Sweden,† ascribed by LINNÆUS to eating charlock, may possibly be in some degree propagated in like manner.

3. Fevers, accompanied with violent convulsions, sometimes become epidemical, and both distempers may possibly be propagated by contagion.

Examples of this kind are recorded by WILLIS;‡ to have happened in England about the year 1661; by MULLER,§ in Germany, about the year 1741; and by BARAILLON,|| in France, in 1774.

\* *Waldschemed de morbo epidemico convulsivo per Holstatiā grāfiante 1717. Apud Halleri Disp. ccliv. T. vii. p. 518.*

*Wedel de morbo spasmodico maligno in Saxonia, Lusatia, &c. 1717. Apud Hall. Disp. cclv. T. vii. p. 551.*

† *Amœnitates Acad. Tom. vi. Memoires de la Soc. Roy. de Med. à Paris, T. i. Mem. p. 310.*

‡ *Willis de spasms universalibus, qui in febribus malignis male judicatis, et quibusdam anomalis excitare solent. De morbis convulsivis, cap. viii.*

§ *Muller de morbis epidemicis spasmodicis 1741. Apud Halleri Disp. iv. T. i. p. 78.*

|| *Sur une espèce d'épilepsie qui reconnoit pour cause le virus exanthématique miliare. Hist. de la Société Royale de Médecine à Paris, T. i. p. 225.*

See also *Mem. de la Société Royale de Médecine, T. i. p. 303.*

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These short hints will give the intelligent reader a sufficient clue, whereby he may prosecute this interesting inquiry. In the passages above-quoted, he will find references which will lead him in succession to many other authors, who have recorded facts of great importance in such an investigation.

It is proper in candour to acknowledge, that few of the authors above-quoted ascribe these epidemical convulsions to any affection of the Imagination; nor do all of them relate facts which might warrant such a conclusion. In general, they attribute these maladies to unwholesome food, or bad air. But the distinct manner in which Mr. GRIFFITH plainly discovered, and accurately described, the commencement and propagation of the Anglesey Convulsions, will induce the medical reader farther to investigate this subject, whenever an opportunity may occur.\* The principles which I here wish to establish are forcibly confirmed by the complete success of the measures which were suggested

\* The whole intelligence above-stated was confirmed by PAUL PANTON, esq; of Plas-Gwyn, in Anglesey, who was a visitor of the Literary and Philosophical Society at Bath, when this paper was read. He informed us, that hysterical disorders were very common in Anglesey, and that MARIA JONES, one of the servants at Plas-Gwyn, about 1790, was attacked with hysterick fits, and that four other female fellow-servants were infected by her with convulsions. This MARIA JONES was sent to the Chester Infirmary, to be my patient, but could only be admitted an out-patient, on account of the regulation above-mentioned. It is proper to remark, that Plas-Gwyn is placed in a dry situation, not at all likely to be affected by marshy effluvia.

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to me from an idea that the distemper spread by a kind of infection, and might be prevented by the prohibition of intercourse between those who suffered, and those who were most susceptible of such nervous affections.

I recollect that Professor WHYTT, in his Clinical Lectures, used to observe, that the lowest rank of women in Scotland were much afflicted with hysterical and other nervous disorders. The following fact, related by Dr. FALCONER,\* confirms the doctrine I wish to establish, by proving how much they lie under the influence of the Imagination:—"I have been informed, from the best authority," Dr. CULLEN's, "that during the troubles in Scotland, in the years 1745 and 1746, the hysterick disease scarcely made its appearance."

If the opinion here stated have a solid and true foundation, it is manifest that such maladies may be prevented by practicable regulations. If Mr. GRIFFITH had not benevolently interfered to succour his poor distressed neighbours, and to check the progress of this alarming distemper, it would probably have spread through the whole island of Anglesey; as had actually happened through larger districts in Scotland, Germany, France, Sweden, &c. When the nature of these epidemics, and the cause of their propagation, become generally known, other gentlemen of humanity and intelligence will exert their influence to prevent such distressing calamities.

\* On the Passions, p. 109.

*A Recapitulation of Conclusions submitted to the  
Consideration and Discussion of the Literary and  
Philosophical Society.*

1. In the preceding narration, the effects ascribed to the fictitious Tractors are greater and more wonderful, considering the evidence, than what are related to have been produced by the patent Tractors of Mr. PERKINS.

2. Hence it may be fairly concluded, that the metallick Tractors derive no additional influence from Galvanism, or animal electricity.

3. The detection of this delusion is not less complete than what is reported by the Commissioners of Paris, in regard to MESMER's animal magnetism; whether the number and competence of the witnesses, or the marvellous effects produced by the mere force of Imagination, be considered.

4. Had the trials at Bath and Bristol been instituted with metallick Tractors only, they would probably, indeed undoubtedly, have deceived the sagacity of the medical witnesses in both hospitals, as they have done in many other places. It was the mode of trial with fictitious Tractors which detected the fallacy, and exposed the truth so clearly as to remove every doubt.

5. The rule which prohibits the admission of females afflicted with hysterical or epileptick fits, as in-patients into the Chester Infirmary, ought to be adopted in all hospitals. It is well known that medicines cannot  
always

always cure these disorders; and much mischief in producing them may be justly apprehended by introducing such a patient into a female ward.

6. From the facts above related, and what are recorded by authors, it appears probable, that in some districts, convulsions are liable to be communicated from one family to another, 'so as to become epidemical. Such calamities may be prevented by any medical or other intelligent and humane neighbour, who has influence and authority to hinder all intercourse between persons afflicted with and liable to convulsive disorders.

FINIS.