

Blick his former master, he was elected surgeon in his room; and subsequently, St. Bartholomew's Hospital obtained under him a reputation which it had never before acquired.

Abernethy was a pupil of John Hunter, and the earnestness and delight with which, at an early age he received the lessons of this his great master, were indications of the soundness of his own judgment. It was from this profound and original thinker, who exercised an extraordinary influence over the understanding, tastes, and pursuits of his young pupil, that Abernethy derived that ardent love of physiology, by the application of which to surgery, he was destined to convert a rude art into a beautiful science. He made himself thoroughly acquainted with anatomy, but it was that he might be admitted into the *then* new world of physiology; he studied structure, but it was that he might understand function: and the moment he had obtained a clear insight into these two sciences, he saw the application of which they were capable to the treatment of disease. From that moment he looked with contempt on the empiricism then almost universal in surgery; he ridiculed its jargon; he exposed the narrowness of its principles, if it be at all allowable to designate by such a term the ignorant dogmas which alone regulated the practice of the surgeon. But he did not content himself with deriding what truly deserved contempt; he laid the foundation of, and mainly contributed to build up, a new edifice. By the diligent study of nature and by continual reflection on what he saw, and, as he himself expressed it, the concatenation of what he saw, he reduced to order what he found a chaos. Hitherto the surgeon had looked upon the class of diseases which it was his part to treat, diseases which have also a local origin, and consequently as diseases which are to be cured by local applications. To Abernethy belongs the great merit of first perceiving, in its full extent, the utter incompatibility of this notion with the true phenomena of disease, and the inertness, or, when it ceased to be inert, the mischievousness of the treatment that grew out of it. In a work abounding with acute and original observation, and exhibiting comprehensive and philosophical views, entitled, *The Constitutional Origin and Treatment of Local Diseases*, he lays down and establishes this great principle:—that local diseases are symptoms of a disordered constitution, not primary and independent maladies; and that they are to be cured by remedies calculated to make a salutary impression on the general frame, not by topical dressing, nor any mere manipulations of surgery. This single principle changed the aspect of the entire field of surgery, and elevated it from a manual art into the rank of a science. And to this first principle he added a second, the range of which is perhaps somewhat less extensive, but the practical importance of which is scarcely inferior to that of the first—namely, that this disordered state of the constitution either originates from, or is rigorously allied with, derangements of the stomach and bowels, and that it can only be reached by remedies which first exercise a curative influence upon these organs. The benefit daily and hourly conferred upon mankind by the elucidation and establishment of these two principles both by the prevention and the mitigation of disease and suffering, it were vain to attempt to estimate, and it is not easy to pay to their author the debt of gratitude which is his due.

Further, the same philosophical view of the structure and functions of the human frame, which enabled this acute physiologist so greatly to improve the theory and practice of surgery, suggested, and at the same time armed him with the courage to perform, two operations in surgery, bolder than any that had ever before been achieved, and the repetition of which has since been attended with splendid success—namely, the tying the carotid and the external iliac arteries. The announcement of the performance of these capital operations at once established his reputation as a sur-

geon, and increased the credit of the English school throughout Europe.

Great, however, as was the reputation which this distinguished man acquired as an anatomist, physiologist, and surgeon, it is probable that he owed his celebrity chiefly to his success as a teacher. Gifted with the genius to master and extend his science, he was endowed with the still rarer capacity of communicating to others, in a clear, succinct, impressive, and fascinating manner, whatever he himself knew. Easy and fluent, yet not inelegant—abounding with illustration and anecdote, yet methodical—logical, yet often witty, and occasionally humorous almost to coarseness—seldom impassioned, yet always impressive, and never allowing the attention of his audience to flag for a single moment—it was rare, indeed, that he failed to convince whoever heard him, and as rare that he failed to make whoever was convinced a decided partizan. Nevertheless, a highly competent witness, speaking apparently from a careful and mature examination of the impression made upon his own mind by the prelections of his master, gives the following account, which, if true, is decidedly unfavourable as to the ultimate result of the mode and spirit of his lecturing. "He so eloquently expounded some of the highest truths," says Dr. Latham; "he so nicely disentangled the perplexities of many abstruse subjects; he made that so easy which was before so difficult—that every man who heard him feels, perhaps to this day, that for some important portion of his knowledge he is indebted to Mr. Abernethy. But he reserved all his enthusiasm for his peculiar doctrine; he so reasoned it, so acted it, and so dramatised it, (those who have heard him will know what I mean); and then, in his own droll way, he so disparaged the more laborious searchers after truth, calling them, contemptuously, "the Doctors," and so disported himself with ridicule of every system but his own, that we accepted the doctrine in all its fulness. We should have been ashamed to do otherwise. We accepted it with acclamation, and voted ourselves by acclamation the profoundest of medical philosophers, at the easy rate of one half hour's instruction. The great Lord Chatham, it is said, had such power of inspiring self-complacency into the minds of other men, that no man was ever a quarter of an hour in his company without believing that Lord Chatham was the first man in the world, and himself the second; and so it was with us poor pupils and Mr. Abernethy. We never left his lecture-room without thinking him the prince of pathologists, and ourselves only just one degree below him."

If this were, indeed, the ordinary result, then it must be admitted that the excellence of Mr. Abernethy, as a teacher, was, after all, but of a secondary order. He only teaches well who sends his pupil away thirsting after truth, determined to search for it, feeling that he has a clear conception of the manner in which he is to get at it, and, at all events, in no mood to be satisfied with any thing but the entire truth.

The private character of Mr. Abernethy was blameless. He was highly honourable in all his transactions, and incapable of duplicity, meanness, artifice, or servility. His manner in the domestic circle were gentle, and even playful; he gave to those about him a large portion of what his heart really abounded with—tenderness and affection; and on his part, he was tenderly beloved by his children and by all the members of his family. In public, and more especially to his patients, his manners were coarse, capricious, churlish, and sometimes even brutal. It would not be difficult to account for this anomaly, were there any use in pursuing the investigation; his conduct in this respect merits unqualified censure. If but one half of the stories that are told of him be true, the feelings they should excite are disgust and indignation. Without doubt, it is the interest of every patient to state his case to his medical adviser in as few and plain words as possible, and then to listen without