

The value of Dr. Cullen's researches, we will soon perceive, in the investigations, of Brown; and Dr. Thompson himself, was never more puzzled and confounded, when he had to contend alone with the whole faculty, than Dr. Brown appears to have been, in throwing off the entanglements of Cullen's system. He studied under Cullen; he lived in his family; and he lectured on his system. But I shall give the history of his scientific progress in his own words. "The author, says Brown in the preface to his works, the author of this work has spent more than twenty years in learning, teaching, and scrutinizing every part of medicine. The first five years passed away in hearing others, in studying what I had heard and implicitly believing it, and entering upon the possession, as a rich and valuable inheritance. The next five years I was employed in explaining the several particulars, in refining them, and bestowing on them a nicer polish. During the five succeeding years, nothing having prospered according to my satisfaction, I grew indifferent to the subject; and, with many eminent men, and even the very vulgar, began to deplore the healing art, as altogether uncertain and incomprehensible." You have here, my friends, the decision of this original mind, on the imperfection of a system that had been progressing for four thousand years. "All this time passed away, says Dr. Brown, without the acquisition of any advantage, and without that, which, of all things, is the most agreeable to the mind, the *light of truth*; and so great and precious a portion of the short and perishable life of man was totally lost!—Here I was, at this period, in the situation of a traveller in an unknown country, who, after losing every trace of his way, wanders in the shade of night. Nor was it until between the fifteenth and twentieth years of my studies, that a faint gleam of light broke in upon my soul."

Dr. Brown then proceeds to detail the cause of this new beam of light which broke in upon him. He had an attack of the gout, in the thirty-sixth year of his age; his mode of living had been generous until the six months previous to his fit of the gout, during which time he had

used the most sparing diet. The disease spent its force in six weeks, and did not return until after an interval of six years, and an abstemious diet of six months.

The theory of the physicians was, that the gout was caused by plethora and excessive vigor. Vegetable aliment was enjoined as the only mode of cure. The rationale from the cure to the proximate cause, was certain; but Dr. Brown discovered that the error lay in the proximate cause and of course must defeat the remedy. For during a whole year of strict adherence to the prescribed regimen, he suffered four severe attacks. In short, he says, the whole year except fourteen days, was spent between limping and excruciating pain. Upon this experience, and these facts, he constructed his new theory. Why, when he lived well was he exempted from the disease, and when dieting himself was he attacked in a manner so formidable and unrelenting? The solution of these questions opened his eyes, and led him forward to an inquiry more comprehensive.—What is the effect of food, drink and the aliment which support life? They produce strength. What is their effect afterwards? Always less and less. What is it towards the end of life? So far from giving strength, they prove weakening. And finally, the very powers which support life at first, prove its destruction at last; but generally through the intervention of disease.

From this process of reasoning, he perceived that his disease was occasioned by a deficiency and not a redundancy of blood; that debility was the cause of his disorder, and the remedy must be sought in a sustaining and stimulating diet; this he called *direct debility*. Such was the success of this new practice, that for two years he had only a very slight attack; and this soon yielded to increased stimuli. He computed from these data, that the disease was alleviated in the proportion of forty-eight to one. A young gentleman living with the doctor at the same time, and suffering under asthma, in consequence of the same treatment, had only one fit in two years, instead of one every day, while he pursued the common practice. This mode of practice he found success-