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For the Pearl.

PHRENOLOGY :

ITS OPPONENTS, ADVOCATES, PROGRESS, AND USES.

A Lecture delivered before the Members of the Halifax Mechanics' Institute, on Wednesday evening, November 13th.

BY DR. WILLIAM GRIGOR.

When I first turned my attention to Phrenology it was under the late Dr. Spurzheim on his visit to Edinburgh. From that time to the present I have been convinced of its truth and importance as a science. In Nova Scotia, nineteen years ago, I met with no Phrenologist; but many were much surprised that I should earnestly believe such a visionary doctrine. Times, however, have greatly altered here as elsewhere. And in looking back on many great improvements, I have the gratification to observe among them the progress of Phrenology. Its history in this Province may be briefly stated. At a literary society, formed partly by the officers of the 8th and 52d Regiments, and partly by a few gentlemen of the town, about eight years ago, a lecture for the first time, was delivered on Phrenology. Since then several lectures have been read in this Institute; besides a course, on the same subject, by a Mr. Burke—who, though a very exceptionable teacher, in consequence of a remarkable propensity to theorize before his data arrived, and who had many more reasons than facts to present to his audience, yet achieved a good deal in recommending this science to the serious attention of persons either before ignorant of, or sceptical on, the subject.

Besides the lectures which are now annually delivered here, I am happy to find that others have been read at Pictou and Truro; and that a small portion of the medical gentlemen of the Province have the interests of this important science sincerely at heart. In rather a widely extended acquaintance, I do not now find many persons entertaining the prejudices formerly in vogue against Phrenology; and those who still adhere to this once fashionable sort of hostility are chiefly where education has been confined to the classics and literature, and where the more useful and substantial sections of physical science have been either neglected or entirely excluded. With this exception, it is nevertheless to the credit of Halifax that Phrenology has annually from two to three hundred attentive auditors listening to its moral and humanizing doctrines in this building, and that a knowledge of its principles is gradually disseminating itself around us.

In taking upon myself the charge of this portion of the course, I cannot but feel that I afford you a poor substitution for the ability of others who have preceded me: and I would have spared myself the present attempt, had I known that any other person, friendly to the interests of Phrenology, would have undertaken the occupation of it. An early pupil, however, of Spurzheim, and a sincere believer in the science which he then so ably illustrated,—I feel that I would be deserting my own convictions, confirmed by every day's experience, were I to allow the subject to pass in silence, or to suffer reproach, by even the semblance of indifference, or neglect, on the part of the least capable of its disciples. For these reasons I come to maintain the standing of Phrenology, as a portion of knowledge for several years identified with the lectures of this Institute. So far removed from the field where it has been most successfully cultivated, and with slender means to maintain our connection with its literature, it must soon fall into the hands of those who find it easier to be witty than wise, and suffer a local disparagement, if not extinction, if some one among us did not from time to time map out the advancement which it continues to make in the modern empire of science.

Misguided by the prejudices of education or the fashionable influence of the age, the most distinguished talents have been brought to oppose Phrenology. And of all the modern sciences that have suffered from this sort of ignorant and imperious hostility, it may be said to have made the most triumphant resistance;—to have not only established itself as an integral portion of the grand circle of science, but on several of the most important occasions carried the war into its enemies own country, and spread a degree of chagrin and confusion that was little anticipated, and certainly not prepared for, in that imposing quarter.

As there is no portion of the press of this province in which there is any regular advocacy or opposition of Phrenology, the public generally has no means of information as to the present state of this science. So little indeed is heard of it, that many fancy in consequence, that it has been completely overthrown, and passed away like some ephemeral creation of the age. Least this supposition should continue to prevail, I have in view in the pre-

sent paper to lay before the Institute an account of Phrenology as it now exists in Great Britain.

I am not aware of the history of any science that has required so much talent, discrimination, and ability, in its promulgators and disciples as this of Phrenology. It has met with no ordinary hostility; by each and all of the professions it has been held either as sacrilege, quackery, or imposition; from men of every grade of general information and science it has experienced opposition; it has afforded an ample field of jest and merriment to the wit and humourist;—its name has been tacitly the watch word of opposition in all the Universities; it has excluded men of the highest qualifications and merit from Professor's chairs; in Italy it was the means of driving one Professor from his situation;—from the days of Dr. Gordon to those of Dr. Pritchard, it has passed through an era every moment of which has been occupied in hostility with its enemies; and, in fact, it may be said that an annual conscription during all this time has been regularly levied against it in every part of Britain and the continent—whether the hostility was draughted from the professional members of Universities or the more ordinary classes of society.

The time has scarcely past since any one unmolested could entertain even a feeling of pity towards Phrenology; and it has been within my own experience that it was to be denounced as disaffected to the things that be, to harbour ideas favourable to this rebel against the established course of mental science. But throughout all this persecution, in which not only the men, but the manners and fashion, of the day were engaged, Phrenology maintained its course, and every where presented a bold front and rocky resistance to the stormy waves that assailed it—and now stands fast, amidst a conflict that would have annihilated any other foundation, than that which has been laid upon the immovable basis of truth.

We shall consider, then, the opposition which Phrenology has experienced and defeated;—the progress it now makes throughout Great Britain;—the applications of it as a science; and the advantages which mankind are likely to derive from it.

The literature of Phrenology affords us one of the most striking examples which the infancy of any of the sciences exhibits of the bias which education and society imprints not merely on the individual minds of great men, but on what may be spoken of as including the general range of national intellect. The novelty of any discovery that is really great, seem to be, knowingly, as it were, received by great numbers with suspicion and distrust, just in proportion to the accuracy and importance of the facts calling for investigation. Before the new proposition is fairly understood, hasty arguments are marshalled up to meet and refute it, and great men, like little men, being too often influenced by first impressions, and by accident, or mischance, having once expressed their opinions, are in many instances thus retained to a particular course in future, by considering it more in tact with their standing and reputation to be consistent with themselves, even, in a hasty declaration, than to suffer themselves to be influenced by persons for the moment less known and less reputed. Nothing else can account for the unjust, the unphilosophical course, pursued by some distinguished men against Phrenology. The conceit, the prejudice, the ignorance, which one and all of them have discovered in their blind hostility—the humiliating refutations they have repeatedly subjected themselves to, the sophistry and bitter sarcasms on which they have been obliged to retreat, the renewed attempts to annihilate the science by untenable arguments—again and again renewed, or, made worse than at first,—powerfully demonstrate the predominance of too much feeling over the reasoning faculties of the enemies of Gall. And, again, the increasing numbers, information, and talents, of Gall's proselytes, confirm the supposition that Philosophy and investigation is not with the opponents of Phrenology, nor truth—sheer disinterested truth—the object of their continual warfare.

When Dr. Spurzheim came to Edinburgh he was assailed by a talented young physician, Dr. Gordon. Language, through the medium of the Edinburgh Review, was scarcely sufficient to heap contempt enough upon the head of the continental innovator. He was denounced as a quack and impostor. His anatomical views were declared to be as absurd as his Craniology. Though a man of mild unassuming manners and possessed of some of the highest philosophical qualities he was treated as a mere itinerant or charlatan: some of the leading Professors would not receive him at their houses;—and as if truth was to be hid under a bushel and confined to the keeping of the city magi, it seemed to be resolved, that it should not enter Scotland at all events, in the formula of a poor German with an ordinary coat on his back.

Fortunately, however, for the sake of truth, even in the face of

these high pretensions, Spurzheim's anatomical demonstrations were not to be resisted,—his manner of dissecting the brain was new in Britain; and it was eulogized by Dr. Braclay, one of the most minute anatomists in Europe—who expressed himself thus, in my own hearing, that though he had been demonstrating the brain to his pupils for nearly forty years, yet he, in conjunction with all the teachers of anatomy in Great Britain, had been taught a lesson on cerebral anatomy by Dr. Spurzheim. Spurzheim's lectures on Craniology, now called Phrenology, made a deep and lasting impression on his pupils at Edinburgh; and the seeds that he sowed there, in the very midst of the briars and thorns that would have choked them, grew up in spite of every obstruction, to flourish to a degree, which not only commanded the approbation of Spurzheim himself, but the admiration of every land where a Phrenologist, or I may say, general reader, is to be found. And I was proud to read in the late splendid work of Vimont, the most elaborate one we possess on Human and Animal development, published at Paris, that he speaks of the Scotch Phrenologists in terms not often applied by Frenchmen to those of a foreign land.

Every where Gall and Spurzheim's demonstrations have been received and adopted as accurate, though leaving the field open for progress and improvement. Yet the enmity of the Edinburgh Review—for unhappily Dr. Gordon met an only fate—has ever since hung upon their career, and it has continued to yelp at the heels of Phrenology, till latterly its acrimonious voice is almost too weak to be heard. Dr. Gordon's cause, in the Review, was assumed by Lord Jeffery, than whom, perhaps, a more able, more influential, and more severe critic, does not exist in our day. He has twice personally assailed Phrenology. But his lordship has twice found that to be an authority upon the general polemical subjects of the Edinburgh Review, is not the same as being one of philosophic reference,—on the stubborn and well observed facts of science: he has twice found that he has been but a poor antagonist to the sure and disciplined observer of nature, who follows no royal way but that which truth like a pillar of fire illuminates;—he has twice found that with his own and the talents of the united contributors of the Review, he has not been able, in five and twenty years, to substantiate a single fact subversive of the principles which Phrenology still maintains. Whately, an impartial judge, and now the first logician of the day, has declared, that to the last attempt, the reply of Mr. Geo. Combe has been "triumphant." And surely no reader can peruse this document, in comparison with Lord Jeffery's, without regret that the author of it, in defending the cause of truth, should have been obliged to expose the remarkable inaccuracies of a man of such high reputation, but who had assumed the judge, in a matter concerning which he was deficient in knowledge.

The truth seems to be that Lord Jeffery, on this subject, in opposition to George Combe, became an ignorant, blundering, I was going to say, puerile critic; in every point respecting this science and the necessary knowledge connected with it—in every point where facts and inductive reasoning are to be met, the latter is immeasurably superior. His pamphlet, in reply to the former's last attack, demonstrates this to the satisfaction of every body. And nothing surprises the readers of Jeffery more, than that he should have ventured into the lists of this controversy, without the knowledge of the weapons with which he was to assail, or, be assailed. In fact, Combe, has rendered his lordship's science altogether contemptible,—nor does he appear inferior to him in lesser points of talent and composition. Indeed we have so long been in the habit of looking up to Jeffery as a planetary guide for the course of our opinions, that we are not prepared to find his orbit in this instance, as it were void, and altogether without illumination.

Dr. Pritchard's fate, in the hands of Dr. Andrew Combe, has been less conspicuous, because the assailant has been less formidable in name, but as a foe to Phrenology he has scarcely been left with the semblance of a weapon. To show you what kind of arguments, Phrenologists have to meet, even from professional quarters—which ought to be somewhat superior perhaps to those of laymen,—I shall here refer to a specimen or two, which may be fairly taken as a sample of almost all those made use of by the opponents of Phrenology.

Let me meantime premise that Dr. Pritchard is a practitioner of Medicine in Bristol, and in a late treatise on Insanity has written his third refutation of Phrenology. Three times, Dr. Combe says, the Doctor has killed his foe. This fight has not, however, been like the three days' combat of Prince Arthur and the Dragon; for the Prince at last succeeded, after darkening the sun with dust and drenching the earth with gore—Dr. Pritchard's foe, on the