

THE BOTANIST.—BEING THE BOTANICAL PART OF A COURSE OF LECTURES IN NATURAL HISTORY, DELIVERED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE, TOGETHER WITH A DISCOURSE ON THE PRINCIPLES OF VITALITY, BY BENJAMIN WATERHOUSE, M.D., BOSTON, 1811.

By H. Beaumont Small, M.D.

There has recently come into my possession a copy of the first botanical lectures delivered in America. Just one hundred years ago, 1788, Doctor Benjamin Waterhouse was authorized by Harvard University to deliver to "such students as shall obtain permission from their parents or guardians, a course of lectures on Natural History." The book itself was printed in 1811, but the lectures are corrected up to, and dated, 1804.

It is somewhat out of place to take up the time of the meeting with such a paper, but the fact of these lectures being the beginning of the teaching of botany in this country, and the strangeness of some of the views expressed in them, may give it interest. I shall only refer as concisely as possible to some of the most striking oddities that have attracted my attention.

The lectures follow much the same course as those delivered at the present day. They commence with the seed and continue with a consideration of the stem, leaves, buds, blossoms and fruit. Interspersed are a history of the science of botany, sketches of the lives of Linnaeus, and other of the early botanists, and a history of botanic gardens. The last seems to have been suggested by the fact that such a garden was being talked of at the University at the time.

His opening remarks seem to imply that the lectures on other branches of natural history had been delivered, and that now he entered the field of botany. They also indicate the novelty of the subject:—

"As natural history is a subject that has excited some attention for more than a dozen years past at the University in this place; and as that branch of it denominated botany has lately become a topic of conversation, and likely to become more so, we have thought that it would conduce to good, if we laid before the public a few essays on this pleasant department of nature."

Further on we learn what he proposes:—"Some of the leading principles of this charming science we mean to extend through a series