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### *Original Communications.*

#### THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE IN CHINA.

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China.

The practice of medicine is more or less empirical, that is, founded upon experience. We might, therefore, reasonably expect many substantial additions to our means of combating disease from the accumulated experiences of ages, recorded in Chinese books. To say that any one coming to China with such expectations would be disappointed, is putting the case very mildly; we would rather say, he will turn from the study with pity or contempt, if not with loathing and disgust.

Did we not know it to be true, it would surpass belief, that the physicians of a nation so old, so distinguished for her literary men, and so practical in some departments, should receive with unquestioning submission the falsehoods of their predecessors, and that so many ages have rolled away without the most distant approach to truth in the systems taught concerning the structure and functions of the human body. In any of the book stores in China, a diagram issued by the authority of the Imperial College at Peking can be bought, which gives an outline of what is known and taught in China regarding the anatomy

of the human body. In this diagram the œsophagus is rightly made to enter the stomach. The trachea goes through the lungs into the heart, and three tubes, passing posteriorly from the heart, connect it with the spleen, the liver, and kidneys. The kidneys are shown to be connected with the spinal column, and from them originates a subtle influence, which passes upward into the brain, and downward to the spermatic cords. The kidneys have thus a place of the first importance in the animal economy, as the Chinese locate between them the Ming Mûn or gate of life. These notions be it remembered are not the aberrations of irresponsible pretenders, but the undisputed teachings of the Imperial College, handed down without questioning through many generations, carrying with them the authority of deified sages, and having all the sanctity which religion and antiquity can give. In successfully dealing with a machine, the mechanic must be familiar with the structure of its parts, and the action of the whole when put together. But in China we have the human body, the most wonderful and complicated machine in existence, treated by ignorant quacks, who, taking advantage of the self-renovating powers of the human body, assume to heal its maladies, correct its irregularities, and make it work harmoniously. It is quite unnecessary to add that surgery as an art has no existence amongst the Chinese. Nature must effect her cures unaided by science, and her efforts in