

as the vegetable medicines. Here is a strong testimony to the theory of Thomson.

Dr. Glisson was the first of the moderns who paid any attention to the vital principle, and the first who mentions irritability as a property of this *vis insita*. He defines it to be a property, which, preceding in all bodies, can be excited to action by irritation; that it resides in a mucus, and is perfected by heat and blood. He had no idea of the distinction between sensibility and irritability, and therefore he uses the old distinctions of *animal*, *vital* and *natural* functions. Because a muscle was seen to contract, when pricked, although separated from the body, he believes the fibres and muscles had *perception* in themselves. Here again he confounds sensibility and irritability; one attempts to confirm the hypothesis, by the remark that there can be nothing in the intellect, but what we receive by the senses. Dr. Cullen advanced the same maxim one hundred years afterwards. Baglivi also pursued, to a great extent, his observations on the phenomena of the vital principle. Haller says, irritability is *independent* of sensibility, and *vice versa*. Gil-
 isson thought irritability depended on volition; Belloni, on the accelerated motion of the blood; Baglivi on the oscillatory motions of the *dura mater* along the membranes; Stahl, and his followers, supposed irritation to be innate and *influenced* by the soul. Dr. Winter traced all human motions to fibrous irritability and stimuli; and the younger Boerhaave to the moving power of animals. Dr. Whytt believed irritability essential to motion, and was produced by a sentient principle residing in the medulla of the brain. Dr. Kirkland thought that this medullary substance was conveyed by the nerves to the muscular fibres, which caused motion. But Dr. Whytt affirmed perception was necessary, in connection with all or any material substance to produce motion; While Zimmerman and Cederus demonstrated by experiments, that irritation was as general in the animal fibers, as *attraction* in the universe; and was altogether separate from the mind and soul.

You see, my friends, how difficult it has been for the professors of this art, to fix upon

one scheme of principles. Well might Dr. Brown say, "the science was altogether uncertain and incomprehensible; and could yield no satisfaction to his mind." When the principles are so jarring and incoherent, the practice founded upon them must be defective, and partake, in a great measure, of the uncertainty of its foundation. This was perceived and confessed by all the *faculty*.

And the new systems introduced in the beginning of the eighteenth century by Stahl, Hoffman and Boerhaave, were intended to supply a remedy. But alas! they were equally different as they were new; and instead of removing the disorder, they only operated to its augmentation; and inflamed the wound they were designed to heal.

DR. STAHL.—His leading principle was, that the rational soul of man governs the whole economy of his body. It was observed at *all* times in the history of medicine, that the animal economy possesses, in itself, a principle or power of resisting injuries, of correcting or removing diseases, arising in it, or induced upon it. Sometimes this has been called nature's effort to throw off disease. This was ascribed by the ancients, to an agent in the system, which they called the *to arche*; and from Greece the language passed into the west, of a *vis conservatrix et medicatrix natura*,* and has not only continued in the schools, but has been retained in the heart of the multitude to the present, and from the most ancient times; and perhaps, after all, the doctrine of dame nature is the truest of medical theory. Dr. Stahl supposes, that this power of nature so much talked of, is nothing else but the rational soul; that when it perceives noxious powers threaten the body, it excites such emotions in the body as shall expel them. This theory was greatly opposed by Dr. Nichols in his *Oratio de Anima Medica*; and also by Cullen in his physiology. Dr. Caubius, in his pathology, says it is a capricious government of the animal economy, and not to be relied on. Stahl and his followers, called this the Hippo-

*That the force of nature is a preservative of health, and a remedy against disease.