

DR. THOMSON'S THEORY.

All bodies are composed of the four elements, *earth, air, fire and water*. Earth and water constitute the solids, and air and fire, the fluids, of the body. The healthy state consists in the proper balance and distribution of these four elements, and disease by their disarrangement. All disease is caused by obstruction; the mode of cure is to remove it by diffusing heat over the system, for *heat* is life, and *cold* is death. All disease is the effect of one general cause, and therefore requires a general remedy. Whatever supports the internal heat and directs the determining powers to the surface, will expel the disease, and save the patient.

Through the long experience of thirty years Dr. Thomson thinks he has discovered those medicines and that mode of practice, which will accomplish this object. He has tried them on the most hopeless cases, and still found them effectual. Indeed such was the nature of his trials and difficulties, that he was only called in to the aid of the patient, when given over to death by the other physicians. The progress of his skill was therefore *tested* by a succession of the most desperate and deadly maladies.

If it be objected to his system, that the four elements composing the human body, are not a correct enumeration of primary substances, I reply that it is the most simple, obvious and ancient distribution of the primary elements. It was Aristotle's division, and that of many other celebrated philosophers. Indeed, it is not long since the physiologists and chemists began to add to the number of primary elements. From seven to nine, and forty-six, they have summed up the number at different times; but they are not now sure whether this last number should be enlarged or diminished. Indeed, they confess that the real, simple, elementary principles of matter, will never be discovered. The natural division of Thomson, made in times of old, answers all the purposes of his system, and the operations of the healing skill.

The assertion, that *heat* is *life*, is, at least, equally as philosophical as the affirmation of

Dr. Rush, that *motion, heat, sensation, and thought*, when united, compose perfect life.—His cause of disease, being ascribed obstruction, seems to amount to the same as Dr. Rush's morbid excitement; and that *cold* is *death*, is about equal to the extinguished excitability of Dr. Brown.

The conclusion of the whole matter, is, that Dr. Brown perceived, that the systems of medicine were too complicated, and therefore uncertain and false in many of their principles. He, by a close attention to facts in his own case, discovered a method of curing disease, at once simple and comprehensive, extending to all cases. Dr. Rush understood well, the value of this new mode of reasoning, and though he has added sensibility to the system, he has not much improved it. Brown is more philosophical than Rush, for he gives the principle of life merely a name, which serves his purpose, excitability, without pretending to say what it is, whether a substance, or quality of substance. He says it is a somewhat, which he cannot pretend to explain. And this is surely better than to make life the mere effect of the united action of organization and stimuli.

Dr. Thomson might only intend, like Dr. Brown, to express by the phrase, *heat is life*, the unknown *something* which he could not describe; and, that *cold* is *death*, he might only mean an effect of death. *Cold*, is generally considered a negative term, to express the absence of heat. Dr. Ray says, it is the effect of a condensed or cold ether, from which heat has been expelled. Plato calls it a fluid of gross particles, which presses upon, and stops the pores of bodies, excluding heat. Life is a metaphysical subject, and cannot be investigated by the laws of physics. This preposterous mode of reasoning has led to all the absurdities uttered on this sublime theme.

Dr. Thompson, in calling *heat* life has more philosophy on his side than people imagine, or than even he himself is aware of. *Light, heat and fire*, are only the same substance, in different states or conditions, and acting in a different manner. They are all signified by the same word in Hebrew and Greek, and also in