

good quality, as some of the most impure articles were purchased at the highest prices.

The subject of the action of medicines is treated by the author with much ability, but as he does not bring forward any new views, we shall not make any extracts from this part of the book, but merely remark, that he appears to lean to the revived doctrines of humoral pathology. The different modes of introducing medicines into the system are next described, and followed by a brief exposition of the various circumstances which modify the action of medicines upon the frame.

On the classification of medicines, we cannot do better than extract the first paragraph, as it contains some very judicious remarks with which we heartily concur.

“In every department of knowledge, a general classification of the various subjects embraced in it is of the greatest utility. It simplifies the science, and thus facilitates the acquisition of it. It is, in fact, nothing more than a generalization of otherwise individual and detached facts, by some principle of common relation. Any principle may be adopted as the basis of a classification, and almost every classification will be found to give rise to new combinations and interesting analogies. It is not to be inferred, however, that it is a matter of indifference what classification is adopted; on the contrary, not a little of the interest, as well as the character of the science may depend upon the selection which may be made. The principles which, it appears to me, ought to be chiefly held in view in the construction of a classification of the *Materia Medica*, are the following:—In the first place, the basis of it should not be theories, but *well established facts*. Unless it be so, it is evident that the classification must be fluctuating in its character, at the same time that it may lead to serious practical errors. In the second place, as the great object of the science is the investigation of the effects of medicinal substances upon the human system with a view to the cure of disease, such a classification should be preferred as is best suited to the attainment of this object.”

The author objects to a classification “founded on the botanical relation between plants;” and in our judgment correctly, because there is no certain connection between the medicinal properties of plants and their affinities. Every candid inquirer must admit, that the notion of the qualities of any plant being known from the natural order to which it belongs, is a fallacy, and a dangerous fallacy, for, if acted upon, it could hardly fail of leading to mischief. There is scarcely one of the natural orders that does not contain plants having secretions of the most opposite characters. It is a mere evasion of the question to say that in many instances the active medicinal or poisonous principle is so diluted as to become inert, for neither by chemical analysis nor by experiment can the assertion be borne out.