

COLONIAL PEARL.

A VOLUME DEVOTED TO POLITE LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND RELIGION.

Published every Friday evening, at 17s. 6d. per Annum.

VOLUME THREE.

FRIDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 13, 1839.

NUMBER FIFTY.

For the Pearl.

PHRENOLOGY :

ITS OPPONENTS, ADVOCATES, PROGRESS, AND USES.

A Lecture delivered before the Members of the Halifax Mechanics' Institute, on Wednesday evening, November 13th.

BY DR. WILLIAM GRIGOR.

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Dr. Pritchard it appears armed himself with the proper weapons of a philosophic champion, but unfortunately, he was not skilled in their scientific usage—or if so, he took care not to apply them accordingly to his antagonist. In illustration of this, he states, that he has had his attention directed for many years to this enquiry, and omitted no opportunity that presented itself of gaining information on this subject; he states, also, “that the Phrenologist need not go beyond the limits of his own species, in order to establish his doctrine on the basis of experience—that if a relative amplitude in a given region of the brain were always consistent with a proportional display of one particular faculty, or quality of mind, the constant coincidence would prove a connection between the two phenomena; that Phrenology certainly admits of proof or disproof, and would obtain it, if the measurement of a sufficient number of heads, and those belonging to marked qualities of mind, could be accurately and indisputably known; and, that if the testimony of facts on a great scale should be found adverse to the alleged coincidences, or to the correspondence of given mental qualities with certain conditions of the brain, Phrenology will not continue to make proselytes, and it will be ultimately discarded as an hypothesis without foundation. At present most persons seem to be in doubt on the subject, and to be looking out for evidence.”

The person who can acknowledge this Baconian method of investigation will be naturally enough expected to enter, in good faith, on the course which has so properly and fairly to the interests of truth presented itself. As an arbiter of a question of so much consequence, we will naturally too hope to be carried by him, from place to place, in search of the evidence which is to confirm or refute the doctrine in hand;—we will of course have to trace him from asylum to asylum, from prison to prison, penetrating to penitentiaries,—until he has searched the kingdom, and from all quarters collected, arranged, and with scientific acumen set, the facts, in that order and form, as that he who runs may read them. But the science of observation and experiment has lost its power in the hands of Dr. Pritchard. For while he urges the labour of it on the disciples of Phrenology, he reserves an easier method for his own use, and suitable for himself in his own closet—the Doctor works in his slippers, not in his walking shoes. He sits down at his ease and then takes every opportunity that occurs to him in his closet to make the necessary enquiry! In pursuance of this method, he enquires of others what their experience on the subject has been; but it is very extraordinary that though he wrote to persons who had great fields of observation within their reach, that he happened only to consult those who were on his own side of the question. He was thus satisfied with the experience, not to say anything of the experiment, of others; and with a new *Novum Organon* in his eye, trusted to a sort of hear-say evidence, a hear-say observation of facts, to constitute what may be called his hear-say method of investigating the laws of nature. Is this the course that Bacon recommended: or, even that Dr. Pritchard himself has proposed? Did Gall sit in his closet and trust to the authority of correspondents when his own eyes and hands were to be employed? The justice which a court of law would afford would be extremely meagre, if the advocate, the witnesses, the evidence, and the judge himself, were all on one side. Yet Dr. Pritchard consulted only those who were hostile to Phrenology; whilst he entirely omitted those medical gentlemen attached to lunatic asylums who were favourable to it, and who had made actual observation and experiment their guide. Could he believe that his mere dictum, supported by a few references to what may be termed hostile experience, would prevail over the testimony of other men of very high standing as medical attendants of lunatic asylums? And when he might have consulted such men as “Mr. Hare of the Retreat for the Insane at Leeds, Dr. James Scott of the Royal Naval Lunatic Asylum, Sir William Ellis of the Lunatic Asylum at Hanwell, Dr. Disney Alexander of the Wakefield Asylum, Mr. Brown of the Montrose Asylum, Mr. Galbraith of the Asylum at Glasgow”—all medical practitioners who have given the most ample testimony of the success of Phrenological treatment in their several seminaries. And yet Dr. Pritchard, from the insulation of his closet, declares that he does not remember one

who could say that his own observations had afforded any evidence favourable to this doctrine.

But the Doctor's new mode of collecting evidence for the purposes of science does not stop here, for whilst he took care to correspond with those only whom he knew adverse to Phrenology, he had some show of truth in declaring the results of his inquiry; he however adopted another artifice not altogether so manageable in his hands, by quoting persons favourable to Phrenology and casting a false interpretation on their arguments, as if, they too afforded him no evidence favourable to the doctrine. He thus refers to M. Georget and to M. Voisin—pupils of Esquirol—the latter writes in the very book from which he makes his extracts “we shall add that M. Esquirol having made a numerous collection of skulls and busts of deranged persons will one day be able to publish valuable information on the relations between the form of the head and the different disorders of intellect, and thus illustrate many points of the Phrenological doctrine of the brain, taught by Dr. Gall.” Yet this man would guide your opinions on Phrenology—would be an authority for the public in estimating the truth or falsehood of one of the most important sciences which modern times have discovered. Falret, Ferrus, Broussais—Vimont, are all French authorities of the highest reputation in this matter, yet are not referred to, or, are misrepresented,—whilst Rudolphi, whom Gall himself has most elaborately refuted, indeed, it is almost tiresome to read the minuteness with which he does so, is amply quoted as an authority in the estimation of Dr. Pritchard. Dr. Andrew Combe justly complains in his able reply to Dr. Pritchard that he overlooks the opinions expressed by Phrenologists in the Phrenological journal—a work which has repeatedly challenged him to make good his statements, but which he has hitherto found convenient not to notice.

Where truth is concerned, and where the interests of mankind are deeply involved in the establishment of that truth, it is impossible to pass from the hostile labours of Dr. Pritchard without some feeling, that one knowing as well as he, how to point out the way, should so openly in the face of his own directions, have erred from the straight path, and for the sake, perhaps of a little day of ephemeral fame, seek to recommend himself by proceedings as disgraceful to him as a man of Philosophical investigation as to his reputation as a lover of truth and justice.

You may perhaps imagine that such an instance of malevolent criticism is peculiar to Dr. Pritchard. But he has got a confederate in his Philosophy—and one too who has a fellow feeling for him in his hostility to Phrenology. This is the author of the article, Phrenology, in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the new edition of which too, it seems, promises “to correct and expunge all things imperfect or antiquated for the substitution of more instructive matter and more complete inquiring, that those arts and sciences which were not treated in the supplement, or which have assumed a new aspect, either from the progress of discovery, or accumulation of facts, or improved systems of classification will be considered anew.” The person selected for these excellent purposes with regard to Phrenology is Dr. Roget.

It appears the Doctor wrote, long ago, the article, *Cranioscope*, in the *Encyclopedia*; and consequently, to improve the matter, he undertakes about twenty years afterwards, to furnish the publishers of this work with all subsequent improvements and progress of Phrenology. To do this according to the principles of the new edition he must have been selected in consequence of his capacity to expound the principles of the new Philosophy. In his reading, knowledge, and experience, he ought to be qualified above ordinary men in this department. It is not for the critic but the expounder of science that we look in an *Encyclopedia*. Whatever a man's particular predilections may be, they are not required of him in conveying the information which we look for in such a public work. We want to read the science as it is—and not as it may happen to be in the mind of a hired and hostile critic. The Geologist, or, Mineralogist, alone, is allowed to treat of these subjects. Is it too much to ask for Phrenology the same privilege? would not Mr. Combe have written this article therefore better than Dr. Roget? Then why prefer the unqualified, to the qualified writer? Because, it appears that there is patronage in science as well as in other affairs; and because MacVay Napier promised to his readers what he has not performed, and thereby rendered his new edition in this instance, at least, a mere vehicle of criticism and neither correcting or expunging “all things imperfect or antiquated for the substitution of more instructive matter and more complete inquiry.”

Dr. Roget, overlooking perhaps this promise of his publishers, proceeds to reprint his former article on *Cranioscope*, under the

improved title of Phrenology. Reason for doing this was no doubt in the mind of Dr. Roget, because he had no substitution of “more instructive matter” to offer. That is a paper written twenty years ago is made suitable to a science that has been the means of drawing forth as much, if not more, Philosophical discussion, careful investigation, and intellectual talent, than any other in the last half century. But according to Dr. Roget the science must have stood still during all this time. In 1818 the great originator of the science had not completed his work—how then in reference to him, not to mention a dozen of other writers on the subject since then, is this article to fulfil the object of the publishers of the *Encyclopedia*? We turn to this emporium of science and we find Dr. Roget referring us to the writers on Phrenology—but to whom? Will it be believed, that omitting every writer subsequent to 1818, he only refers us to those who had written previously to that period. It is not necessary that I should occupy your time by mentioning all the names—I mean celebrated names, that have written on Phrenology since the period alluded to—Scotch—English—American—French—Danish—German and Italian. It is enough to say that Gall himself regarding some of them writes thus before his death. “They who read English, and are interested in the Physiology of the brain will be readily convinced how much those men have contributed to its perfection.” Yet the *Encyclopedia*, because of the ignorance, or invidiousness of Dr. Roget, can afford us no account whatever of anything that this host of able men have added to Phrenology. And let me here make a digression that have read, Gall's work, and lately that of Vimont, Broussais, Combe, Simpson, &c., and were my convictions otherwise respecting Phrenology than what they are and have been, I would still think as others do, that works of greater interest—wider range of information—address in the collection, arrangement, and application of facts to their leading principles, is not to be found in an equal number of works on any other subject of science. If you desire valuable and entertaining works as a recreation amidst the labours and cares of daily occupation, it is to these of all others, that I would most assuredly direct your attention. For though Vimont has many peculiarities and pretensions on the science of Gall, not sufficiently authentic, and with some flattering personifications of himself in the third person (“*selon moi*,”) yet, the prodigious labour of his work—for he presented to one of the Institutions of Paris a collection of two thousand five hundred specimens of the heads of animals—the half of which he was himself personally familiar with, the remarkable accuracy and beauty of his drawings—(for his work was published at the great price of £30.—By thus insuring the best masters—some of the drawings I have taken the pains to compare with specimens in my own possession all of which afforded me the most satisfactory testimony of his accuracy) the fact, that all this was the product of a man too, at first, hostile to Gall's views, and commenced for the purpose of refuting the originator of Phrenology, by facts and facts only;—but that they, as he proceeded, should rise in a body of evidence against his own predilections, and finally convince and convert him,—I say, under what circumstances soever we view his work, whether as to its immense body of facts and evidence—its influence over the fate of Phrenology—the style of its execution,—the contents of the letter press,—it every where commands our attention and merits our praise and admiration. But for all this, such a splendid work, and well known too, and heard of, over Europe, is refused a place in Dr. Roget's consideration!

Broussais, another excellent writer, on this subject, whose work I have had an opportunity also of reading, meets with a similar treatment from the ambiguously informed Dr. Roget. The consequence of all this is that the Doctor only writes of Phrenology previous to 1818;—to a period too, that he certainly had not the least idea of it as a science; or, that, it should continue to exist, a month after his article was published.

Both the Combes have ably answered him,—and further, have challenged him to support his assertions;—but it would appear that he has a very convenient side both for hearing and seeing, for they have heard or seen nothing from him respecting these challenges to this hour. Yet so completely has he lost the consistency of an analytical critic that in spite of himself, when he thought he could pounce upon some vulnerable point of his adversaries, he unconsciously refers to some of the works subsequent to 1818—showing that he does wilfully suppress the whole information which he himself has obtained since the date of his first article.

But, let us turn from this silly and bigotted character of Dr. Roget, and consider what may be viewed as some of his open