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ADVERTISEMENT.

IN superintending the present edition of Dr. Armstrong's admirable work, the sole object of the Editor has been to add such references and suggestions as might render it more particularly valuable to the American student and practitioner. He has confined himself, accordingly, to the addition of such matter as relates to the character of the various diseases treated of by the author as they have been observed in this country. Elaborate disquisitions upon theoretical points he has considered equally irrelevant and useless. In addition to the complete work of Dr. Armstrong, this edition will be found to contain in the Appendix an interesting paper from the same pen, in which the candid and accomplished writer expresses an entire change in his opinions in relation to the contagious character of typhus fever. In the true spirit of enlightened philosophy, the convictions of the author on this subject were at once laid before the public; and we believe their re-publication will add much to the value of the present edition.

EDITOR.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF TYPHUS FEVER, OF THE COMMON CONTINUED FEVER, AND OF INFLAMMATORY DISEASES, &c.

INTRODUCTION.

NUMEROUS theories have been formed to explain the nature of fevers, but the history of medicine proves, that none have been so constituted as to remain permanent. At different periods, by accident, genius, or diligence, many discoveries were made, which opposed the prevailing doctrines of the day, or for which those doctrines could not satisfactorily account. By the investigations which such occurrences naturally produced, the most elaborate theories, time after time, have been overthrown, and others, supposed to extend to a greater number of appearances, successively advanced, which in their turn have also fallen before the progressive improvements of the medical art. And as men in general are more fond of pursuing abstract inquiries than collecting and arranging matters of fact, it is likely, that some authors

will continue to erect, and others to demolish systems, until the desirable period, should it ever arrive, when general principles shall be as firmly established in physic, as in the more perfect sciences. The most celebrated of modern theories, like those of preceding ages, have been drawn from partial or imperfect views, and are more or less fallacious when tried by experiment. It is, therefore, my intention in treating of fevers to adhere, as closely as the nature of the subject will admit, to the consideration of their phenomena and effects; and to endeavour from these, together with the known powers of remedial agents, finally to deduce some special principles of treatment, capable of considerable extension.

The term fever has been used comprehensively to express a whole class of diseases, and limitedly to express some of the specific affections of that class; and it has also been employed in an abstract sense, denoting the combinations of febrile phenomena, without signifying any particular fever. One set of authors has arranged under this term every disease attended with increased action of the heart and increased heat; while another set has restricted it to those febrile disorders, which have been supposed to be independent of all local affection, and on this account called idiopathic. Nor is it uncommon to see it used as an abstract term in the medical publications of the day, as if fever were some peculiar and subtle essence, and the concurrence of attendant symptoms mere accidental appendages. But as the disorder of the constitution designated fever, has always appeared to me as the result or the sign of some antecedent change in the system, howsoever induced, an extended though a definite signification of that term will be preferred in the following pages. The pyrexia

of nosologists shall, therefore, be considered as a class in which three orders are comprehended; two orders in which the causes are specific though at the same time essentially different, and one order in which the causes are not specific but common. The first order comprehends fevers proceeding from contagions, the second, fevers proceeding from marsh and similar miasmata, the third, fevers proceeding from the vicissitudes of the weather, and other ordinary causes. It must be manifest, that the first order admits of a subordinate division, since some of its varieties only affect the same individual once, while he may be repeatedly affected by others; but still all the varieties of this order are distinguished in arising from, and propagating themselves by peculiar contagions. The second order is characterised by exclusively deriving its origin from marsh and similar miasmata: its species certainly do not necessarily possess the power of disseminating themselves by any inherent quality; and in this they differ from the varieties of the first class, while the nature of their origin marks them from those of the third and last. The third order embraces all those fevers which proceed from the general impression of heat or cold, from local irritations, or from any cause not having the special properties of contagion or of marsh effluvium; and therefore what are called symptomatic fevers naturally fall under this order, although it shall be shown that several of its varieties arise out of an universal impression on the system, the force of which is finally spent upon those parts which had previously been disposed to disease.

It may perhaps be asked, in objection to this arrangement, that if we do not class diseases by a reference to the similarity or discrepancy of the pathognomonic symptoms, shall we be

safer in founding our arrangements on their causes, some of which may rather be conjectured than positively ascertained? Certainly if theory be allowed to influence our arrangement, it ought to be theory successfully investigated and established by observation. As it has not been *proved* that every contagious fever is in every instance produced by a specific contagion, and as considerable obscurity still hangs over the subject of marsh effluvia, it probably might have been quite as satisfactory, if the classification of fevers had been founded solely on their phenomena. Yet the arrangement here chosen, however defective it may be, presents some great pathological outlines, which I have not been able to find in any other; though it is not my design to limit myself to them throughout, but to abandon them whenever they may be likely to lead from any point of practical importance. Whatever may be the advantages of methodical arrangement in medical pursuits, I am chiefly anxious that my views on specific and determinate subjects should be clear and comprehensive; and if I can but accomplish this, shall be content to leave, for the present, the general conceptions which relate to nosology as things only of secondary regard. How various soever the causes of fevers may be, their great and most important effects upon the vital organs are nearly the same. These effects shall be made conspicuous in the following pages, so that the reader may consider them among the leading objects of the work; and in concluding the series of illustrations, an attempt will be made to reduce the pathology and treatment of all acute fevers to a few plain principles. The nature of my plan having been thus premised, several diseases, referrible to one or other of the above or-

ders, shall be successively examined, and first of all typhus fever in particular, as it is intended to be made the groundwork of the most important parts of the discussion.