A SKETCH

OF THE

MEDICAL TOPOGRAPHY

OF

LEXINGTON AND ITS VICINITY:

BEING AN

INAUGURAL DISSERTATION,

SUBMITTED TO

THE EXAMINATION OF THE

REV. JOHN ANDREWS, D. D. PROVOST

(PRO TEMPORE),

THE

TRUSTEES, AND MEDICAL FACULTY

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,

ON THE 21ST DAY OF APRIL, 1806,

FOR THE

DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MEDICINE.

BY BENJAMIN W. DUDLEY,

OF LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY,

MEMBER OF THE LEXINGTON AND PHILADELPHIA MEDICAL SOCIETIES.

PHILADELPHIA,

PRINTED BY THOMAS AND GEORGE PALMER,

116, HIGH-STREET.

1806.

TO

DOCTOR JAMES FISHBACH,

OF LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY.

DEAR SIR,

A PUPIL is no doubt most indebted to his first preceptors in medicine. Having commenced under the care of yourself and Dr. F. Ridgely, when I was entirely ignorant of the nature of my object, it was the pleasure of each to inspire me with industry and confidence, to remove my difficulties, and to elucidate many obscurities in medicine, all of which had a tendency to enhance my medical acquisitions. Those considerations alone are sufficient to create the purest sense of regard. May you long continue the exercise of those talents, which, with ordinary attention, cannot but exhibit genius and judgment. As a testimony of friendship, please to receive this imperfect essay from

Your most obedient friend and pupil,

THE AUTHOR.

TO

BENJAMIN SMITH BARTON, M. D.

DEAR SIR,

THE ingenious and useful manner you have pursued in your lectures, has not only convinced those gentlemen who have had the pleasure of attending them of their great utility, but it has created a desire in many of us to be present, and share in the advantages of future seasons.

Your unparalleled industry in the arrangement and delivery of useful matter is the means of contracting the warmest regard of all your pupils; but, independent of this, sir, I am obligated to you for the particular attention bestowed on me since my first visit to the city.

Please, sir, accept this my first and imperfect production, as a testimony of the high sense I entertain of superior talents; and, with the greatest respect for your good qualifications as a gentleman, I have the honour to be

Your most obliged,

And very humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

A SKETCH

OF THE

MEDICAL TOPOGRAPHY, &c.

THE Ohio River, which serves as the great outlet to the productions of the western country, forms the boundary of the state of Kentucky to the north and west, the Virginia line bounds it on the east, and the state of Tennessee on the south.

The soil of Kentucky, and particularly of Lexington and its vicinity, is so well described by geographical authors on this subject, that it appears almost superfluous to enter into a minute detail. It may, however, be observed, that the state throughout is remarkable for the universality of limestone. Different districts put on very different appearances in respect to soil: some parts are of a sandy nature, some of a poor and light description, while other parts are of a dark, rich, and most luxuriant kind.

It will be sufficient to observe, that, very generally, the soil is so favourable to the growth of all those vegetables which exist under the influence of the climate, and which do not require peculiar local circumstances for their growth and perfection, that one of the greatest evils accruing to the agriculturist is the growth of foreign vegetables in his tillage fields.

The great variety of vegetable productions of this part of America acquire a degree of perfection and magnitude, which are un-

known on the eastern side of the mountains; but whether it gives birth to many new species is yet undetermined. From all the observations I have been able to make, I believe the remark of Mr. Ellicott is just, relative to the identity of the vegetable kingdom on the east and west sides of the Allegany mountains. Some species, however, as the Aesculus flava, or Buck-eye, the Gymnocladus canadensis, or Coffee-tree, and a species of Sophora, an important dye article, appear to flourish more particularly in this state. To the first of those vegetables the citizens appear to have but little attachment. Its fruit falls early in the season, and, in consequence of its excessive use as food by the cattle, they are subject to a paraplegia, and frequently death. Those who have doubts relative to the powers of the Aesculus in producing this affection among cattle, must give their assent to it when they are assured, that the same effects have arisen from its use in a girl, who took a large quantity, with the hope of its curing an obstinate intermittent. This affection was soon relieved by the free use of drastic purgatives.

Many valuable medicines can be obtained in different parts of the state, such as the Podophyllum peltatum, or May-apple, the Spiræa trifoliata, or Indian-physic, the Datura stramonium, or Jamestown-weed, the Liriodendron tulipifera, or Poplar, the Cornus florida, or Dogwood, the Prunus virginiana, or Wild-cherry, the Juglans cinerea, or Butternut-walnut, and various species of Quercus, or Oak.

As the soil of this country is not favourable to the growth of all vegetables, we are deprived of many of those delicious fruits, which grow in great plenty in situations more remarkable for the barrenness of the soil.

The town of Lexington, situated near the middle of Fayette county, sixty-four miles from Ohio River, and half encircled by the Kentucky River, at the distance of ten, fifteen, and twenty miles, is erected within one mile of the most elevated piece of ground of all the adjacent country. As the rivers Missisippi and St. Laurence have almost a common source, and pursue rectangular directions, Lexington and its vicinity give birth to four different streams of water, which pursue almost opposite courses. Lexington has a northerly position of 38° 20′, and the longitude west of London is 85

10′, or of Philadelphia about 9°. The town runs in a north-west direction three quarters of a mile, and is about half a mile broad.

Lexington includes a small stream of water, running in Water-street, into which all the water of pumps, wells, and springs, with the offal matters of the town, empty themselves, either directly, or through the medium of sewers for that purpose. Lexington, which could only boast of a few houses and one solitary carriage in the year 1791, is now composed of near five hundred houses, a very great part of which have been erected of elegant brick, within the last ten years. The streets are laid out to form squares, which are not so large as those of Philadelphia. Luxury and gaiety have kept pace with the rapid growth of the town and the increase of population. The public buildings consist of a university, a court-house, a bank, a market-house, and four churches. Within the last two or three years, the citizens have made handsome progress in paving the streets with excellent limestone. The soil of the town, excepting the changes produced by manure, is in no respect different from that of the adjacent country. In common with all other rich lands, the mud of the lanes and streets renders walking very disagreeable in wet weather; but the great porosity of the earth, together with solar influence, and an elevated situation, very soon dissipate excessive moisture.

In describing the waters of Lexington, I am sure I shall not be extravagant in the assertion, that few situations are better supplied with this great necessary of life. There is some small variation in the sensible qualities of the different springs and pump water, but the difference is so inconsiderable, that all are capable of answering every domestic purpose. The water from an excellent source is conveyed to some parts of the town by pipes, but having been placed near the surface of the earth, the water is influenced by the sun, and rendered too warm to drink.

There is a very considerable difference in the temperature of the different waters, and this leads to a useful practical inference respecting their use in the warmer seasons of the year. Saline, sulphur, and chalybeate waters are common in different parts of the state, but none such have been discovered in Lexington.

I am sorry that I have not been able to furnish myself with any barometrical observations taken at Lexington; but as I know of no circumstance whatever which would tend to regularity in atmospheric pressure in Lexington more than in any other situation on the continent, and as we are liable to as great and immediate changes of weather as any other situation, I am led to conclude, that the variation in the barometer would be equally great. Placed in a situation so remote from the focus of philosophy, and labouring under the disadvantages of an infant country, our opportunities for philosophic observations have been on a very limited scale; but we hope, from the ambition of those in the pursuit of science, that we shall soon be in possession of observations which will serve us on many future occasions.

The rapid increase of the population of Lexington is no less remarkable than its first settlement was perilous. A few years since, the population consisted only of about seventeen or eighteen hundred souls, while the present number of inhabitants must exceed four thousand. This rapid increase is no doubt to be attributed in a great degree to migration; at the same time, the innocent nature of the climate is such, that there are but few infants which, with ordinary attention, cannot be brought to years of maturity.

The constitutions of the citizens are much modified by their particular modes of life. The seven different temperaments of the professor of the institutes can, with peculiar propriety, be applied to the citizens of Lexington and its vicinity; but, to speak more definitely, there are few constitutions more robust and energetic, and few expose themselves more to the changes of the weather. The delicate female, the lawyer, the merchant, and the mechanic, all give their constitutions a very material modification, in consequence of their different pursuits in life; and this is always followed by diversified states of morbid excitement, arising from the same cause.

The females suffer a loss of appetite and health, from want of regular and properly accommodated exercise, and from improper diet, from taking too much or too little aliment, from the use of strong tea and coffee, and of too much animal food. Few of them take sufficient exercise to retain health, in the warm seasons of the year, in consequence of which, a lady not unfrequently dates her indispo-

sition from the exercise of a particular party, or from the dampness and disagreeable nature of the evening. The sedentary life pursued by many of them is, no doubt, one great cause of hysteria, in all its different grades, from an unpleasant state of the mind to a general convulsion.

The observation which fell from the clinical chair, " that cold proves the greatest enemy to which mankind are exposed," is but too frequently verified in the western country. The citizen of Lexington, and the adjacent farmer, having been accustomed to receive no serious injuries to their constitutions by such negligence, in the earlier part of their lives, they frequently discontinue it only after they have sustained so great a loss of health, as to be almost useless in their families, and even a burthen to society.

The farmer, who is sensible of the salutary and innocent nature of his climate, seldom exercises those precautions which are requisite, under the sudden changes of the weather, to retain his health; by which means he contracts those diseases only, which are the consequence of sudden transitions from a comfortable room into the cold and disagreeable air. In the summer season, when he has no vegetable putrefaction and stagnant water to produce disease, he frequently subjects himself to the most disagreeable consequences, by the excessive use of cold spring water, both internally and externally, by drawing off his clothes, and receiving the cool breezes in some delightful shade, and sometimes by making so free use of spirits as to derange the animal functions, which frequently terminates in disease.

By unwarranted industry, in exposing themselves too early in the morning and too late at night, no citizens, under circumstances equally favourable, are more subject to disease than the farmers near Lexington; and, ignorant or negligent of the proper precautions, they only make application after the disease has made considerable inroad on their constitutions. But although I charge them with ignorance as it respects medicine (which must be the case even with the learned professional characters who have not made it a study), yet it is but justice to observe, that they are more fond of obtaining useful information, and exercise their own reason on sub-

jects of every description, than many of their brethren in situations more favourable to mental improvement in the United States.

The practice of dram drinking, which crept into society soon after the extensive erection of distilleries in Kentucky, proves a fruitful source of disease; and its patrons, who cannot afford to make use of liquors of a superior and more innocent nature, consume large quantities of peach brandy and whiskey, which are manufactured at home. Spirit, like opium, when taken in proper time and quantity, constitutes one of the first articles of the materia medica; but, like opium with the Turks, it is too frequently converted to those purposes, which prove a degradation to mankind, and convert them into beings but little superior to the beasts of the forest.

Those, who are the least conversant with medical science, will easily ascertain the diseases which are the consequence of excessive spirituous potation; but what is still more pleasant to be known is, that the best remedy for these diseases seems to be gaining ground in many places, where it could have been but little expected: this is, abstinence from the cause.

The blacks in this, as well as in every other country, are the most subject to those diseases which are the consequence of exposure to the weather, of an insufficiency in clothing, and of scanty and improper aliment. Even if they become the property of some humane master, who takes all the necessary precautions to avoid either of the causes above-mentioned in producing disease, the human mind, in a state of subserviency, cannot, or does not, bring its faculties into play, so as either to exhibit them as descendants from the same source with the whites, or to make the necessary provision for their own comfort in life. Being deprived of the advantages of their own labour, and looking to their masters for support, they almost look to them for health and life also; rambling, after night, from place to place, for the prospects either of amusement or advantage, and opening their bosoms to the prey of causes, which, should they not produce immediate disease, will effect such a derangement in some of the functions, as to bring on fatal affections. Many of them, and sometimes a great part of a family, become the subjects of a consumption, which, from its frequent occurrence, and its variation in

appearance from the disease as it appears in the whites, has contracted their name. In treating of the diseases of Lexington and its vicinity, I shall again notice this negro consumption.

I have now examined some of the most prominent circumstances relative to the constitutions of the citizens; but it is certain that the manner by which the country was settled has a tendency to assimilate to each other the constitutions and diseases of those who suffered the hardships of the Indian wars; and, for the last ten years, the migration from different parts of the world has produced so great variety in the citizens, that it would appear prominently erroneous to specify their constitutions.

In order that we may come at a just knowledge of the incident diseases of Lexington and its vicinity, it is necessary that we should take notice of circumstances of a more foreign nature, inasmuch as they have an influence on this part of the country; and, in doing this, I believe it will be the natural inference, that the favourable circumstances for health are more prominent in Lexington than in almost any other habitable situation.

The excellent tract of land on which Lexington is situated extends to a very considerable distance in different directions, forming the first, most interesting, and most important body of good land which is known in the western country. This fertile and level part of the country is furnished with innumerable streams of greater or less size, which pursue different directions. From the great deposition of rain, which sometimes occurs in the spring season, these waters become so numerous and extensive, as not only to answer all domestic purposes, but they frequently inundate the farms of the country, and prove considerably inconvenient to the agriculturist; while the only vestiges of their remains in the latter summer and fall season are the damages sustained by the farmer, and the effects of a rapid and momentary current on its own bed. No sooner does the cause of those inundations cease to operate, than the streams begin to faulter in their boldness: the nature of the soil is such as to absorb large quantities of water; the numerous caverns serve the office of receptacles; the elevated situation of the country favours a

quick descent of water into rivers; and solar influence is considerable in evaporating water which runs on so dark a soil.

The state of Kentucky is visited with as sudden transitions of the weather, from one extreme to another, as any other on the continent. The uncultivated state of its northern boundary must no doubt influence the weather, but whether there are any other local circumstances which can also influence the temperature is uncertain. The very dark nature of the soil would seem to increase the warmth of the climate; but the great evaporation from the surface of the earth appears to counterbalance this effect, and renders the temperature similar with countries not so remarkable for a black soil. Some facts tend to prove that the climate has been in some degree revolutionized within a few centuries back, independent of any influence which could have been produced by cultivation.

The two species of elephant, the skeletons of which have been discovered within the limits of the state, together with the bones of some other animals, prove that this country was originally inhabited by animals which at present do not belong to our continent, unless they have passed into those western regions which are as yet unknown.

Before entering on the diseases of Kentucky generally, and of Lexington and its vicinity particularly, it may not be improper to consider the nature of many causes which act in the production of disease. Animal and vegetable putrefaction are so much talked of as the causes productive of sickly countries, that we scarce direct our attention to any other source for an explanation. We may, with propriety, confine our attention to those causes, together with intemperance, in the explanation of ninety diseases of the hundred, which occur in the western country. All those diseases which are the consequence of the influence of the sun in decomposing vegetable and animal substances, make their appearance in the latter part of the summer season, when the heat of the sun is greatest, when running waters have collected in natural basons on the surface of the earth, and when vegetables are favourably situated for putrefaction.

I am induced, from several circumstances, to conclude, that Kentucky is not so liable to those malignant forms of autumnal disease as the adjacent state, Ohio. Kentucky has a less number of large currents of water, its subterranean caverns are more numerous, its soil is not of that marshy and moist description, it has fewer ponds of water, and it is more remarkable for the regular appearance of limestone.

It is justly observed by the professor of the institutes, that there is a particular point in the progress of cultivation, which peculiarly disposes to the prevalence of intermittents, where moist lands are the subject of cultivation. He verifies his position by calling to aid that portion of land included in the junction of the rivers Schuylkill and Delaware. In its original uncultivated state, Dr. Rush observes, that intermittents were then scarcely known; that when the British were stationed in Philadelphia, in the time of the American revolution, they destroyed great part of the timber, and exposed this land to solar influence, soon after which intermittents were prevalent, and continued annually, until, by cultivation, its moisture was dissipated. This has been so frequently verified in the western country, and the reason is so obvious, as to preclude the necessity of an explanation. The pleasant and elevated situation of Lexington will operate as an eternal barrier against disease from this cause, while lower situations of the state will be troubled with its frequent recurrence.

I have now said as much as I thought necessary, in order to render the account of the diseases of Lexington and its vicinity as simple as I could. The nature of the climate is such, that it is impracticable to establish any rule relative to the appearance of any form of disease, as belonging to particular seasons of the year. There is no disease, whether pleurisy or typhus fever, which does not make its appearance occasionally in every month of the year. In January, 1805, the only disease in Lexington and its vicinity was typhus, in its worst forms. It is certain that particular months favour the prevalence of some diseases more than others; but a particular rule would be so very exceptionable, that it would be improper to say

that a pleurisy is the disease of spring, and an intermittent the disease of fall months.

The diseases, generally speaking, throughout the state, appear to carry with them no peculiarities, which are not common with other states of the union; and, as a minute description of the diseases of Lexington would be uninteresting, in so far as they are common with the diseases of the continent, I shall merely consider them generally. The ten forms of autumnal fever arising from vegetable and animal putrefaction, the different states of pulmonary fever, from a catarrh to a consumption, diabetes, hepatitis, enteretis, gastritis, dropsies, rheumatism, venereal, &c. are the diseases most common in Kentucky. It may incur the displeasure of some of the citizens, to observe yellow fever arranged among the diseases of particular situations in the state; but the tempest should soon cease, when they are assured, that it is nothing more than a high grade of bilious fever, and that it is more serious both in its attack and consequences, and requires the more prompt attention to medicine and diet.

A great part of the diseases of the western country are frequently concentrated in particular situations. The town of Frankfort is an unfortunate instance of the kind; instead of being the fine meadow of an adjacent farmer, it is the seat of government for the state. It is impossible in the nature of things for this place to enjoy health, so long as the bottom remains favourable for the production of, and the high hills continue to confine, its putrid exhalations. The worst states of autumnal fever have prevailed, and proved fatal to many of the inhabitants for the last few years. I feel much at a loss in confining myself to the diseases of Lexington and its vicinity, as I believe it is practicable, whether we arrange them according to the nosological doctrine of Cullen, or the more modern unity of our own professor, to exhibit as many various states of morbid excitement, as in any town, village, or country situation, the history of which has been recorded.

The diseases of the country have undergone considerable change since the commencement of agriculture. Pleurisies are much less

common and less violent in their attacks, than they were while the citizens, from the infancy of the country, were obliged to live the lives in some degree of the original inhabitants. Rheumatic affections of the acute and chronic kind are less frequent than they originally were, and the suppurated liver is scarcely known until we approach some of the larger waters or stagnating ponds. The small quantity of still water near Lexington precludes a possibility of intermittents becoming prevalent, except immediately on the south side of some few mill-ponds. The few cases of scrophula which occur, seem, many of them, to be of Virginia extract; but from some predisposition, together with the improper management of negro children, its occurrence as an indigenous disease cannot be doubted. Hitherto it has been but seldom cured, from our ignorance of its nature; but from the progress of our great professors of materia medica, and the practice of medicine towards the true nature of medicines, and the cure of diseases, we may now anticipate some degree of success. We must either prescribe some medicine, which acts specifically on the glandular and lymphatic systems, as mercury, &c. or we must restore the harmony of the different systems of vessels by tonics, if too little action prevails, or by evacuants, if the patient can bear this mode of treatment.

It has been suggested to me, by an intimate friend and correspondent, that there is an ophthalmia peculiar to the state of Kentucky; he supposes the affection to be the consequence of the use of lime stone water, and that transient visitors to this country only are the subjects of the disease. My ingenious friend may be in possession of facts, which to him may render the idea conclusive; but, judging from what I have read and heard delivered on this subject, by the different professors of the institution, I am disposed, if not to reject the idea altogether, at least to suspend an opinion, which requires time and probably minute chemical knowledge to determine. Ophthalmia, in all its grades, is one of the most common forms of disease in countries exposed to vegetable and animal putrefaction; and as this state has stagnant waters, standing in great plenty in different parts, may not the most natural solution of this disagreeable affection be the same with that of intermittent fevers?

That ophthalmia is frequently produced by the same causes which operate in producing autumnal fevers, is too well known by us all to be doubted; we suppose, in consequence of previous debility of the eyes, that on the application of miasmata the morbid excitement is invited to (those) the weakest parts. This principle, no doubt, constitutes one of the most important supports in medicine, and can be happily applied on every occasion similar to the present.

I regret, that the lime stone waters of the state have never been subjected to a minute chemical examination, as this would be one step towards accounting for those obscure phenomena. My friend observes, that when the foreigner is not affected with ophthalmia, that diarrhœa is almost always the consequence. If the above explanation I have given be admitted, this last circumstance only tends to substantiate the oplnion, as it shows, in this case, that instead of the eyes, the bowels are most subject to debility, and consequently, the morbid action arising from the application of miasmata is concentrated on those parts.

The singular nature of a consumption, which has appeared in and near Lexington, in some families of negroes, has attracted the notice of some of our physicians, as being as different from the disease as it generally appears in the whites, as their modes of existence are dissimilar. It appears more particularly to be a native among the hard faring negroes of Virginia; but its occurrence in Kentucky is so frequent, as to solicit a minute examination. It discovers scarce any other premonitory signs than general debility, both arterial and muscular; it is attended with very little, and sometimes no cough; the bronchial and tracheal mucus may be encreased, but is not always an attendant; suppuration and expectoration of pus is a very rare occurrence; the patient complains of no pain, sometimes a heaviness in the chest. In a state of rest, the transient visitor would suppose he had been exercising deception, and will hardly be convinced to the contrary, unless he is present at a paroxysm of convulsive respiration, or examines the pulse, which last is always indicative of the greatest debility. No disease assumes

more flattering appearances, for a speedy recovery of the patient, than this frequently does; for several days at a time, he may enjoy a perfect remission of convulsive breathing, may obtain a good appetite, and may be rapidly recovering his strength, when, on a sudden, a paroxysm of dyspnœa comes on, and threatens instant suffocation.

This disease is rapid in its progress, and has always terminated fatally to the patient. Throughout its whole course the only regular attendant symptom is extreme debility; some are tortured with laborious breathing, much more than others, when no perceptible cause can be assigned; various other symptoms, more numerous and novel than occurs in almost any other disease, are frequently complained of by the patient.

On dissection, we find the lungs nearly of the consistence of the liver throughout their whole extent; rarely any other morbid appearance than that of increased solidity. This at once leads us to the knowledge of a disease, which by many of the superstitious class of people has been attributed to poison, and have accordingly sent the poor, and almost breathless consumptive patient, to some old witch woman, to have the poison extracted from his body.

Does not the gradual exclusion of oxygen, by the increase in solidity of the lungs, account for the gradual debility induced? Is not too little morbid action present to be followed by suppuration, at the same time it is sufficiently great to extend the vessels, and almost obliterate the cavities of the bronchial ramifications? The lungs are passive organs, and in a state of health, while the muscles of respiration are performing their office with ease, they at the same time conduce to effect other purposes of a very different kind, without disordering respiration; but when the cavities of some of the bronchial vessels are obliterated, and many of them obstructed, do we not require more prompt and invariable exertion in the respiratory muscles? and should the action of any of them be obstructed either by exercise or an unnatural position of the body, or should an unusual quantity of blood be carried to the lungs, an incomplete oxygenation of it, and, consequently, convulsive respiration will be the consequence.

The difficulty of curing this disease is easily foreseen; we must direct our attention more particularly to the removal of its causes. Improper aliment, scanty clothing, exposure at night to cold in rambling about from place to place, filthiness, &c. must be the causes productive of this disease.

The diseases of females constitute a very great part of the maladies with which physicians have to contend in Kentucky. The many ignorant old women of the country, who pretend to a knowledge of a particular department in surgery, and who are called on more from a delicacy of the patient's feelings, than from a conviction of their qualifications to perform the duties of a surgeon, leave but too many proofs of the impropriety of their whisky stews, their other nostrums, and their precipitate conduct in relieving the sick; and so long as the female class of the citizens refuse to adopt the customs of populous countries and large cities, so long must they be the prey of many distressing complaints, which by proper attention might have been avoided.

It may be proper in this place to make a distinction between those diseases which unquestionably have their origin in the country, and those which appear to have been introduced from abroad. Under the former head, consumptions, pleurisies, catarrhs, bilious fevers, dysenteries, hepatitis, dropsies, rheumatisms, &c. may with propriety be arranged; while under the latter may be arranged small-pox, measles, hooping-cough, influenza, syphilis, &c. In the year 1783, when the residence of the citizens was confined to the different forts of the state, small-pox seems first to have been introduced at Louisville, and from thence to the other forts. About ten or twelve years ago, it was again prevalent throughout great part of the state, and proved fatal to many of the citizens: like many other diseases, when trusted to the operations of nature. We are fortunately but little influenced by the efforts of nature in curing diseases at the present day. But although we are generally believers in the theory of the forced state of life, still even many of those who are its warm supporters are but too frequently disturbing the tombstone of the operations of nature, and dragging out some of her blind laws, which, blended with modern theory, only serves to reduce our ideas of life

down to that chaotic state from which they were delivered by some late philosopher.

If life is a forced state, as we believe, I see no necessity for resorting to nature in the explanation or in the cure of one single disease. The true principle will serve us, on one occasion as well as another; if there are any diseases which disappear without the use of calomel, bark, ipecacuanha, or opium, we are not to conclude that nature performed the cure, as it depends as much on the operation of stimulus, as the cure of syphilis does on the operation of mercury. The food we consume is an effectual medicine in all those diseases which it can transcend in action. In retaining or establishing any principle of a physiological nature, it is presumable that it is with the intent only of extending our ideas of the theory and practice of medicine. Could the operations of nature, the vitality of the blood, and the stimulant powers of cold, be established as truths (which I am sure will never be the case), it would be natural to conclude, that many phenomena would be rendered simple and plain; but as we cannot discover the smallest connection which subsists between the one and the other, I see no use in admitting them in *obtaining an education*. Principles which appear in themselves so doubtful, and which explain nothing, should no longer burthen medical science.

As I have given so minute a description of all those circumstances which would favour the production of disease in Lexington and its vicinity, both as it respects the particular situation of the country and the constitutions of its citizens, I think it unnecessary to protract the subject any farther. But I cannot conclude without discharging a duty, so necessarily incumbent upon me as a pupil: to acknowledge the very great advantages I have experienced by attending the lectures of six ingenious and well-qualified teachers of medicine: and may the professors individually enjoy a share of that happiness in life, which they have so studiously laboured to bestow on their fellow-citizens.