

Moreover, besides the interest which the mere speculative faculty gave to this study, the Art of Healing added to it a great practical value; and the effects of diseases and of medicines supplied new materials and new motives for the reasonings of the philosopher.

In this manner anatomy or physiology may be considered as a science which began to be cultivated in the earliest periods of civilization. Like most other ancient sciences, its career has been one of perpetual though variable progress; and as in others, so in this, each step has implied those which had been previously made, and cannot be understood aright except we understand them. Moreover, the steps of this advance have been very many and diverse; the cultivators of anatomy have in all ages been numerous and laborious; the subject is one of vast extent and complexity; almost every generation had added something to the current knowledge of its details; and the general speculations of physiologists have been subtle, bold, and learned. It must, therefore, be difficult or impossible for a person who has not studied the science with professional diligence and professional advantages, to form just judgments of the value of the discoveries of various ages and persons, and to arrange them in their due relation to each other. To this we may add, that though all the discoveries which have been made with respect to particular functions or organizations are understood to be subordinate to one general science, the Philosophy of Life, yet the principles and doctrines of this science nowhere exist in a shape generally received and assented to among physiologists; and thus we have not, in this science, the advantage which in some others we have possessed;—of discerning the true direction of its first movements, by knowing the point to which they ultimately tend;—of running on beyond the earlier discoveries, and thus looking them in the face, and reading their true features. With these disadvantages, all that we can have to say respecting the history of Physiology must need great indulgence on the part of the reader.

Yet here, as in other cases, we may, by guiding our views by those of the greatest and most philosophical men who have made the subject their study, hope to avoid material errors. Nor can we well evade making the attempt. To obtain some simple and consistent view of the progress of physiological science, is in the highest degree important to the completion of our views of the progress of physical science. For the physiological or organical sciences form a class to which the classes already treated of, the mechanical, chemical, and classificatory sciences, are subordinate and auxiliary. Again, another