

M E D I C A L

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PHILOSOPHICAL
COMMENTARIES.

By a SOCIETY in EDINBURGH.

Durum. Sed levius fit patientia
Quidquid corrigere est nefas.

HOR.

VOLUME FOURTH.

PART I.

SECOND EDITION.

L O N D O N :

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M,DCC,XC.

have here been connected; and you may rest assured, that from my mind they shall never be obliterated. While I am anxious to hold a place in your esteem, and to be a sharer in your affections, I ask no more than I am willing to bestow. Wherever you may be situated, my best wishes shall always attend you, and in whatever I can promote your interest, my utmost efforts shall be cheerfully exerted.

“ Farewell, gentlemen: May every one whom you follow as a teacher be equally anxious and assiduous to instruct you; may every one whom you rank among the number of your friends be equally sincere when he offers you his services; and, may your honest and industrious exertions be ever properly and fully rewarded. Continue through life the same care and attention which you have here displayed, and rest satisfied, that, though the reward of virtue and industry may sometimes be slow, yet in the end it is always sure.”

* * * *

Dr Henry Marcard, Physician at Hanover, in a letter to Dr Duncan, relates the following instance of the congelation of quicksilver.

On

On the 11th of January 1774, a young student of physic at Goettingen, about half an hour after five o'clock in the afternoon, put three drams of quicksilver into a small open glass. Upon this, he laid some loose snow and sal ammoniac, mixed in equal parts. This he put out at a window, from the third floor of a house, by which it was exposed to the open air from the north-west. And he, at the same time, mixed with the snow upon which the glass stood, about two drachms of sal ammoniac.

The snow and salt were soon congealed; but on the mercury no alteration was perceived, till about one o'clock in the morning; Mr Blumenbach then found that the quicksilver was become solid. He observed, that it was divided into six pieces, two very large ones, of more than a dram each. One of them had a hemispherical shape, the other cylindrical. The four others of a smaller size, were nearly about half a scruple each. They were all with a flat side, frozen fast to the glass, but not in contact with the snow and sal ammoniac, with which it was covered. Their colour was different from that of mercury in its liquid state; it was pale, without any gloss,
and

and tended a little to a blue colour, somewhat resembling zinc.

Mr Blumenbach would have broken the glass to try how they did under the hammer; but he wished rather to have witnesses of this curious phaenomenon. At this time, Fahrenheit's thermometer stood ten degrees under 0. In the morning, about seven o'clock, he observed, that the hemispherical piece began to melt, perhaps from its being more exposed to the open air, and from its being farther removed from the mixture with sal ammoniac under the glass than the rest. It had then the appearance of an amalgama, tending a little to that side to which Mr Blumenbach inclined the glass. The other five pieces still remained solid; and he now called for several of his fellow students, whose names he mentions, and who observed, along with him, this extraordinary occurrence. About eight o'clock, the cylindrical piece began to melt; and soon after the four smaller pieces shared the same fate. They dissolved into small bright globules, and soon disappeared in the interstices of the congealed snow and sal ammoniac.

Mr Blumenbach gave an account of this experiment to the Royal and Electoral Society at Goettingen,

Goettingen, and it was lately published in the literary gazette of that university, from which the above account is extracted.

This phaenomenon has not been observed since the year 1769, when it was often seen at Petersburg. On examining the Petersburg commentaries, I find the principal difference between the two observations to have been, that the quicksilver at Goettingen had no gloss at all, and at Petersburg it was bright like polished silver. But, as Mr. Braun took no quicksilver for his experiments but what was inclosed in the bulbs of thermometers, the polished surface of the mercury may have been the effect of the glass which surrounded it.

* * * *

The following articles of Medical and Philosophical news were communicated to Dr Duncan, by that ingenious and industrious physician Dr Percival, to whom this work has frequently been indebted on former occasions.

Extract of a letter from Mr Vaughan to Dr Percival.

Dr Priestley has lately sent a very remarkable paper to the Royal Society, pointing out the uses
of

C O N T E N T S.

B O O K S.

<i>Lavater, J. C. Physiognomische fragmente</i>	11
<i>Darwin, D. experiments on animal fluids</i>	34
<i>Bent, James, account of cutting off the head of the os humeri</i>	40
<i>Brownrigg, William, experimental inquiry</i>	43
<i>Walsh, John, of torpedos on the coast of Eng- land</i>	49
<i>Le Febure, G. R. remede eprouvé pour guerir radicalement le cancer</i>	54
<i>Hamilton, Alexander, elements of midwifery</i>	61

M E D I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S.

<i>Singular effects from the application of blue vitriol, by Mr Samuel Foart Simmons, surgeon at Wingham</i>	73
<i>Violent asthmatic fits occasioned by the effluvia of ipecacuanha, by William Scot, M. D. of Stamfordham, Northumberland</i>	75
<i>An account of the effects of lightning in the dis- cussing a tumour of the breast, communicated</i>	

C O N T E N T S.

<i>to Dr Duncan, by Dr Alexander Eason, physician Dublin</i>	82
<i>Observations on the use of the cabbage-tree-bark, as an anthelmintic, by Mr William Anderson, surgeon in Edinburgh</i>	84
<i>The history of a large prolapsus uteri, accompa- nied with several extraordinary circumstances, from which it appears, that the catamenia flow only from the uterus, and not from the vagina, by Mr James Hill, surgeon at Dum- fries</i>	88
MEDICAL NEWS	94
LIST OF NEW BOOKS	118