

MINIANA I don't consider) and bring it down to these times. Perhaps they do not care to attempt it, for fear of offence; and another reason may be, that the King has absolutely forbid any of his subjects to write the history of CHARLES V.; which, I suppose, is owing to some circumstances relating to religion and that prince, which might be too delicate to touch upon. Tho' it would be both a curious and useful task to trace the secret springs and causes that set a prince of his active and adult complexion upon such various and great enterprizes; who made vast advances towards universal monarchy, and perhaps was nearer to it than any other man ever was since ALEXANDER and CÆSAR; who was not contented to reign while living, but left a political testament for his son's direction after his death; and, what was more extraordinary, a testament, which that son religiously observed and copied from. What can be more astonishing, than to see this same active and restless spirit, all at once, in a fit of disgust, retire to the narrow cell of a poor monk, and there amuse himself with acting over the approaching scene of his own death! For this, however odd it may seem, was certainly done; and tho' alive, he had the same preparations made, of procession, mournings, coffin, &c. as if he really was dead, and was at the same time, what no man ever was before, or will be probably again, the subject, actor, and spectator, all at once, of his own funeral. PHILIP of MACEDON's so much talked of *Memento Mori* was poor to this. This was a sight, which, I believe, few people's curiosity would not wish to have seen. But this was not all: tho' CÆSAR was his model, tho' he conquered all things, he could not, like that Prince, conquer himself: for he soon repented that he ever had resigned the world and his crown, and died at last of chagrin, at the folly of having done that act, which he could never revoke.

LETTER

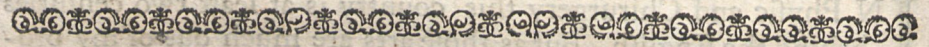
LETTER IV. PART II.

STATE OF PHYSIC, POETRY, &c.

IN Physic and Chirurgery this country is at least two centuries behind the English. But as those arts are much out of my province, I shall give what I have to offer upon them in the words of one of their most eminent writers. There is scarce any study that takes in such a variety of knowledge as Physic doth, and therefore it is no wonder, that the Spaniards, who are slow in all things, have made such a small progress in this part of science. But perhaps the people may be persuaded that they have less occasion for it; where they believe that saints, miracles, and charms, can cure the most inveterate diseases, there must be much less inclination to have recourse to art. They may be willing to leave the more feeble resources of meer human assistance to those, who are so unhappy as to want faith. Not but they have their regular professors in this part of science. Dr. SANGRADO's maxims still prevail among them, notwithstanding they are so finely ridiculed by Mons. LE SAGE, in his GIL BLAS. There cannot be a more striking proof of their want of skill, than the epidemical prevalence of the venereal disease all over this country; tho' possibly they may not desire to have it quite subdued. Give me leave to relate part of a conversation, which I had with a chirurgeon upon that subject. He was sent for by a nobleman to cure him of that distemper, who told his excellency, that if he would follow such a regimen and diet, and regularly take what he prescribed, that he would cure him in a month's time entirely: "Cure me entirely!" replied the nobleman; "no not for the world; I only want you, sir, to correct and lessen it a little; but I would not be cured entirely upon any account: a little of it is the best thing in nature for the health."—"Sir," replied my friend,

friend, "if your excellence only wants *palliatives*, a Spanish chirurgeon will answer that purpose as well as me: my business is to cure, not to continue distempers.—Good morning to your excellence."

As to dispensaries, and accounts of the *Materia Medica*, they may have them, but I met with none. Botany is much studied here, and is well understood: And I am told that the provinces of GALLICIA and VALENTIA afford great plenty of very excellent shrubs and plants.



Part of Father FEIJOO's Discourses upon PHYSIC.

Translated from the Original Spanish.

[The Physicians he chiefly quotes, are, MICHAEL ETMULLER, GEORGIUS BAGLIVIVS, THOMAS SYDENHAM, LE FRANÇOIS, DON MARTIN MARTINEZ.]

THE Spanish physicians follow the system of GALEN, and LAZARUS RIVERIUS: It is from GALEN they have taken the practice of *bleeding* so profusely. But some of the *Spaniards*, such as MARTINEZ, have declared against this practice, and would not admit of it even in putrid fevers; and he said, that the lancet had killed more men, than ever were shot by a train of artillery. FEIJOO seems to be of this opinion: he says, he believes in some cases it may be proper, but difficult to say *when*; that you cannot judge of the goodness or badness of blood by any symptoms, because it alters immediately on coming out of the veins; because every individual's blood is different, and let it appear ever so bad to the doctor, the patient cannot live without it. It is for this reason he condemns all transfusion of blood from one patient to another, as arrant nonsense: and affirms that experiments upon blood confirm this doctrine. Our author is likewise no friend to purging, as he says it carries off the good as well as the bad, the nutritious as well as the pernicious juices; and that it forces the excrements sometimes thro' improper passages. As to saying, that it purges away

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the cholera, or the phlegm, that is all imaginary; because purges carry off all things indiscriminately; and because they give the different colours to the voided excrements by their different tinctures: *Epi-thymy* will give a black dye; and it is well if this be the worst of it: Physicians should take care lest they kill their friends as well as their enemies, as the Turks did at the siege of Rhodes. In common cases you should never purge; never in the beginning of fevers, except in cases of turgency, and even then in the beginning it is inexcusable, and in the end doubtful: It is an effort of nature; leave Her to herself: for purges never affect the morbid matter, unless it happens to be in the *primæ viæ*, and then there is no doubt of the usefulness of purging. Those purges which gripe the most are the best, because the griping comes not from the purge, but from the acid matter they put in motion. And as to vomits and clysters, by the authority of SYDENHAM, I reject them in all fevers. In fine, there is nothing certain in medicine. One physician admires one remedy, which another abhors. What has been said for and against *bellebore*? for and against *antimony*? With these they are *panaceas*, with those poisons. What a rout has been made about medicinal stones! the *bezoar*-stone and many others? Cordials are much the same. Costly medicines and exotics are just as futile; all, all a fable. One house-medicine is worth them all. A French physician I have read of used to give all his patients *coffee*; tho' I am persuaded neither coffee nor tea are of any service. The most known specifics begin to be called in question; the *bark* has many enemies; and *mercury* begins to be declaimed against, though it certainly is the most generous medicine in the whole world. I appeal to experience. English salts are hurtful, because they purge too gently. Too much, too many medicines certainly do a patient more hurt, than any other mistaken practice. All physicians abuse remedies; none observe the *crisis* of distempers; they should never disturb nature: and to apply many medicines, when nature is fighting with a distemper, is to weaken the patient's force, when he most wants it, and taking side with the disease, instead of taking part with nature. As to ignorant practitioners, it is in vain to dissuade them from giving much physic: but if any physician of real knowledge does it for the sake of assisting the apothecary, and of vending his medicines, the soul of

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that physician is in a much more deplorable state, than any patient's body. No view of retaining patients, no reasons of convenience, honour, or of being well with the apothecaries, should induce them to this practice: as they will certainly be culpable in the sight of GOD for whatever damage they may do their patients.

As to physical or medicinal observations, there is great insincerity in them, because a physician gives *one* case in which such a prescription succeeded, and conceals *two*, in which it did not. Every body knows the observations of *Riverius*, which have gained great applause; and tho' they amount to 400, there is scarce *one* which is not defective: It is very entertaining to see the author boast, that he cures a *bilious cholick* with four bleedings, and four purges mixed up with assistant emollients, anodynes, and other remedies: A prescription, which must take up many days; whereas in the natural course of the distemper it seldom lasts so long. To make useful observations requires great knowledge, great sincerity, and great sagacity; and these qualities are not the lot of every physician.

I KNOW not whether this discourse, which I am now publishing, will be agreeable to the gentlemen of the faculty, or not; they may be afraid, perhaps, if the world should grow out of conceit with *physic*, it may become out of conceit too with its professors, and then some would certainly be discarded, who are now in vogue. But they need never fear, they are safe as to this point; the world will always remain just as it has done. No genius was ever able to turn the course of those impetuous rivers, prejudice, and custom. How much have *QUEVEDO* in *SPAIN*, *PETRARCH* in *ITALY*, in *FRANCE* first *MONTAIGNE*, and then *MOLIERE*, declaimed against all physicians and *physic*? and with a great deal of truth. Their writings are read, and celebrated. But things remain just as they were. I shall content myself with persuading some few to follow the best means they can for the recovery of their health. Some physicians have so much generous candor, as to own publicly the insufficiency of medicine, and the perplexity of their art: And it is no wonder to see those, whose minds are not so noble;

confiding in phyfic more than it deserves. Some doctors, out of mere policy, conceal the weaknefs of their art; BAGLIVIVS was one of thefe. But fays another; "It is very well for phyficians "to confeff the impotency of phyfic to one another, becaufe they "are judges, and they know it. But there is no occafion to tell all "this to the vulgar, who believe always that a doctor knows much "more, than he either does, or can know." But I fay on the contrary, that the common people would reap great benefit by fuch acknowledgements, and the phyfician receive no great damage: becaufe if thefe poor people knew how little fecurity there was in phyfic, and that there is fcarce a remedy which is not dangerous; that even the greateft and moft knowing phyficians commit various blunders; that many of thofe patients, who recover, owe their recovery only to their natural ftrength, and they owe to the phyfician the obligation of retarding that recovery: Did they know thefe things, they would have much lefs recourfe to phyfic; they would preferve their entrails more entire, and would not fpend that money in bottles of phyfic, which they wanted for other ufes. They would content themfelves with taking fome flight things in their habitual indifpofitions, which are born with them, and which are infeparable from their conftitution, and which no phyfician in the world can cure, notwithstanding their boasted *radical cures*, which are not to be found *in rerum natura*. With this management many delicate ladies would ceafe to be troublefome to their husbands and families; many men would be ufeful fervants to the public, who are now rendered ufelefs by phyficking themfelves. Thefe, and many other advantages, with the knowledge of how little hope is to be repofed in phyfic, moved me to give this advertifement to the public: and phyficians ought in confcience to concur with me in undeceiving the public.

AND indeed this would be no damage to the faculty themfelves; at leaft to the learned part of them, and who have acquired reputations as fuch. For, to thefe, employment and fees would never be wanting. Becaufe the cafe would never happen, nor the motive for banifhing all phyficians out of the world, as they were once from ROME. The fine lady would not always fend for the doctor to feel her pulfe; nor the imaginary madman, as in the

comedy of MOLIERE, shriek when nothing ails him; nor the decrepit old fool imagine the apothecary's drugs can remove him some leagues from his grave. By this means the physicians would have more time for study, and reflexion upon their studies and their experiments, as well as to assist at anatomical dissections. The most eminent of the profession would be at leisure to write books: by this means physicians would become more learned, and physic advance daily towards perfection, to which it wants many a good journey still. Physic is indeed recommended in Scripture, but not the physic of these modern times; when we are in really imminent danger, I confess it is prudent to have recourse to it; and that, generally speaking, the quickness and immediate application of the remedy is the most important point. *Opium, Quina*, vomits, and very active medicines, may here be of great service, because they induce changes, which nature herself would never produce. If I have expressed myself too strongly in some places about the danger even of cures and physic; it is because I would remove the prejudices of the vulgar, who will follow the blind dictates of even the most ignorant empiric: And I had rather incline them to the other extreme. In all that I have said in this discourse, I have said it under the shade of the most illustrious medicinal writers, and supported by the greatest authorities.

I CONCLUDE with exhorting all, who would choose their physician, to choose one with these qualities. *First*, Let him be a good Christian; because knowing himself accountable to GOD for all his steps, he will take them more seriously and warily, and will really apply himself to the study of his profession. *The second* is, That he be judicious, but of a cool, not warm temperament. *The third*, That he should not be boastful in shewing the power and safety of his art; for those who are such, are either ignorant, or disingenuous. *The fourth* is, That he follow no philosophic system of practice, be addicted to no one set of rules, but guided only by his own experience, and that of the best writers. *The fifth* is, That he be not a giver of many remedies, especially the dangerous ones; holding it as for certain, that all those, who write and prescribe much, are bad physicians, altho' they know all that
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has been wrote about physick. The *sixth* is, That he informs himself exactly of the symptoms of distempers, which are many, and drawn from various sources. The generality of physicians, when they have felt the pulse, looked at the urine, peeped into the close-stool, instantly call for pen, ink, and paper—to *prescribe*. The pulse is a symptom very obscure, the urine very fallible: and one cannot be certain of the distemper and its causes (except in a few cases, where they are visible) without attending to the complexion of many circumstances, both consequential and antecedent. The *seventh* is, That his successes should in general answer his prognostications; I say, in general, because always to do it, they must be angels and not men; for that circumstance will excuse many others that preceded; and because it is the only means by which the most ignorant man can discern, who is a physician of skill, and who is an ignorant one: for the certainty of prognostication is a clear proof, that he knows the present state of the distemper; because by that only which is now, one can know what is to come. On the other hand, that which these prognosticators commonly say, plainly shews they do not know one word of physick. Some think the art of foretelling a separate faculty from physick; and thus some physicians are celebrated for foretelling, others for curing: But this is a mistake, for it is impossible, that the cure should be right, and the prognostic wrong, and *vice versa*. Indeed there is one difference, a physician, who misses of the cure may be blamed, but one who fails in his prophesy may be damned. In a dangerous case, an ignorant physician being called in, said it was only a light crudity of the stomach, which would go off the next day. With this assurance the people about the patient never sent for the priests: Soon after the man was seized with a delirium, and died like a Pagan, or brute. The crime commonly attributed to physicians, is, killing the body; but, in this case, they kill the soul.

OTHER physicians, more cautious, and more artful, take the opposite side; and whatsoever the distemper is, they always say it is a very dangerous one; they give out many orders, put the whole family in a fright, offer their attendance, and their art. So that if the patient dies, they are sure to praise the skill of the physician,
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who said so from the first : If he lives, then the skill of the physician is praised, that he cured so terrible a disorder, and God is thanked that the patient fell into such good hands. One good thing comes from this, that the sick never die without the sacraments. But one evil is, that the fright they are put into sometimes increases the disorder, and kills them. All these ways are full of evil ; altho' the first is the greatest ; but however, gentlemen, ye will find one day the angels, to whose custody the sick are committed, accusing you before God, and placing those before you, who died thro' your fault, or your ignorance.

DISCOURSE VI.

PHYSICIANS know but little of healing the sick ; they know as little what ought to be the proper regimen for those in health ; at least they can give no rules for eating and drinking. This proposition, however absurd it may appear to physicians and others, is proved by the evident variety of habits of body, to which is precisely commensurate the variety of food, both in quality and quantity. One kind of food is hurtful to one, that is good for another ; a quantity that is great for one person is hurtful to another. The proportion of the quantity and quality of food to the habit of each individual can only be known by experience : This experience every man has within himself ; and the physician can only know it by the relation he receives. For I must always tell the physician how much I have eaten and drank, as he cannot know what is proper for me, unless I tell him first what ails me, what fits well in my stomach, what I digest well. The emperor TIBERIUS laughed at those, who consulted physicians after they were thirty years old ; because (he said) at that age every one was able to tell by experience, how to manage themselves. And indeed he seems to have been a striking proof of the truth of his own maxim ; for without being much concerned about his diet, or way of living, he lived 78 years ; and he probably had lived much longer, if CALIGULA had permitted him : for altho' he was very weak, his successor would not trust his death to the strength of any disease : historians agreeing, that CALIGULA helped on his death, altho' they differ in the manner of its being done. However, this maxim