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*Facts in Favour of Phrenology.*

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TWO LETTERS  
TO A FRIEND IN OXFORD;  
IN REPLY TO THE STRICTURES  
OF  
THE EDINBURGH REVIEW.

Lest if we still remain silent, that which we do for quietness' sake, be taken as an argument that we lack what to speak in our own defence.

HOOVER.

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1826.

THE  
LETTERS  
TO A FRIEND IN OXFORD

My dear friend,  
I have just received your letter of the 10th inst. and am glad to hear from you. I am well and hope these few lines will find you the same. I have been thinking much lately of the friends I have left behind me, and of the many things that I have seen and done since I left home. I have been to many places, and have seen many things that I never saw before. I have been to the great cities of the world, and have seen the wonders of their architecture and art. I have been to the mountains, and have seen the grandeur of their scenery. I have been to the sea, and have seen the power of its waves. I have been to the forests, and have seen the beauty of their trees. I have been to the fields, and have seen the fertility of their soil. I have been to the cities, and have seen the life of their people. I have been to the country, and have seen the peace of its fields. I have been to the mountains, and have seen the grandeur of their scenery. I have been to the sea, and have seen the power of its waves. I have been to the forests, and have seen the beauty of their trees. I have been to the fields, and have seen the fertility of their soil. I have been to the cities, and have seen the life of their people. I have been to the country, and have seen the peace of its fields.

## LETTERS, &c.

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### LETTER I.

DEAR SIR,

SOME months ago I stated to you my conviction, that Phrenology had assumed an aspect which, if it did not command assent, entitled it at least to examination and enquiry. That its advocates, professing to have made important discoveries in a very interesting department of Physiology, and appealing to experiment and observation in proof of their assertions, had established a claim to be heard, which no one who felt an interest in the enlargement of the bounds of real knowledge could attempt to gainsay. I endeavoured to press on you the necessity of examination, urging that you ought not to rest satisfied with any thing short of such attention to the inquiry as would enable you to pronounce a deliberate *aye* or *no*, upon these pretensions to a discovery so interesting if it should be found to have its foundation in truth. We

were agreed that no one could be justified in embracing these novel doctrines respecting the philosophy of mind, on speculation merely ; the nature and degree of proof must be well examined before any prudent man would venture to adopt conclusions so startling. But it was urged, at the same time, that it would be altogether unreasonable to reject those conclusions merely because they were novel and startling: That as they professed to rest on inductive proofs, no one could have a right to pronounce an opinion till he had given those proofs a fair examination ; that to be diverted from an inquiry, merely because it might lead to results which would enlarge the existing limits of physiological knowledge, was, at the least, very unphilosophical ; and that to say “ I will not examine your facts—I will make no such observations as you point out—but I will continue to deny your inferences ” would be pretty much the same kind of opposition as Galileo and Harvey in times gone by, and the chymical discoveries in our own day, were doomed to experience. I was willing to suppose that the conversation referred to would not have been without a practical benefit ; perhaps you will say that it was the same hurry to “ gain a remote conclusion ” which made me a phrenologist ; but I did expect, that under your sanction, and with such advantages as Oxford abundantly furnishes, an inquiry would have been instituted, and the claims of phrenology to be considered as a

branch of real science, would be decided upon authoritatively. To the issue of such inquiry, conducted with diligence and candour, the question might confidently be left: but will the inquiry be now instituted? if the idea was really ever entertained will it now be persevered in? now that the thunders and lightnings of the *Edinburgh Review* have been hurled against the system and all its abettors? I fear not, unless it can be made to appear, that this death-doing article, much as it exceeds in length, is altogether wanting in weight, and that the formidable champion who is thus ready to ride a tilt at all he meets, is really not more to be dreaded than Goose Gibby in the trooper's buff-coat and head-piece.

I have no means of knowing to whom the literary property of this article is to be assigned, and am bound, therefore, in what is understood to be the established courtesy of reviews, to suppose it comes from the hand of the Editor himself, not indeed that it can be the production of that practised disputant; so zealous a disciple in the school of inductive philosophy would not surely seek to put down alleged discoveries by reasonings *à priori*—and apt as he is to take offence at *platitudes*, whether written or oral, he would not in his hurry to ‘shoot folly as it flies,’ fire off his piece without knowing how it was loaded, at the risk of being knocked down by the recoil. The reviewer, howe-



ver, be he who he may, has so far succeeded in lending the confidence of truth to his statements that it becomes no light task to controvert them, and to shew that they are either altogether unfounded or else beside the question :—*Grave onus suscipimus et Athenarum et Cratippi*.—Edinburgh and its reviewers are, indeed, a burden not easy to bear, unless we can look for support to the force of truth and right reason. And it will be found, I think, that truth and right reason are not on the Reviewer's side, and strenuous as this advocate proves himself, that he will take nothing by his motion, after all his labour and bitterness ; but the question of phrenology will still stand over for discussion before some less prejudiced tribunal, yet to be formed, which will judge the cause, not on preconceived notions, but upon a real examination of the evidence brought forward.

It will be necessary, however, in the first instance to state what Phrenology really is, and what is the nature of the claims preferred and the proofs offered in its behalf, before we take to pieces the Reviewer's goodly edifice, and shew of what materials it is composed. We must not attempt to deny that there are strong presumptions against the whole system, and that if we listen to prejudice or ignorance, speaking as they now do through their willing servant, the Reviewer, we shall have nothing to say either to its claims or to its proofs. That

Gentleman has evidently satisfied himself that there cannot be any good in it, inasmuch as he eats, drinks, and sleeps, writes Reviews, and prospers in the world, without any knowledge of it ; 'tis a pity, indeed, to disturb such enviable complacency, or to give one moment's disquietude, even by hinting the possibility that there may yet be something for a Reviewer to learn. There is a story of a very useful and worthy lecturer in Natural Philosophy which might, perhaps, apply to our Reviewer :—The good man had been engaged in training the rising generation to a due knowledge of physical science, and had uniformly, and doubtless very properly, spoken of the electric fluid as a simple elementary substance. A philosopher of his acquaintance, however, thought otherwise—he had instituted a series of experiments, the results of which led him to believe that the electric fluid might be decomposed, and that he could actually exhibit its component parts in their separate state. He announced forthwith his discovery, requesting that his proofs might be examined, and his conclusions verified for the benefit of all future classes, who should learn the principles of electricity from the lips of the lecturer ; but he, good man, was of another mind :—his reply was, “ Sir, I will not look at your experiments, I will hear none of your reasonings, I have grown old as a lecturer in Natural Philosophy, and I have always described the electric fluid as a simple substance. People, as far as I can learn, have been very well

satisfied that it should be so, and I will not now disturb myself and them by engaging in any speculation about the matter." Our Reviewer seems to be pretty much of the Lecturer's way of thinking—only he would go farther, and persuade us all to agree with him. If, however, there be any truth, even the slightest, in the system, let it at all events have fair entertainment—let us not in our hurry to get rid of the dross, cast aside the gold which may be contained in it.

But to ascertain what Phrenology is, we must begin by stating what it is not; and, in the first place, it is not a science. Much of the mistake and confusion into which its defenders have fallen would, perhaps, have been spared, and, doubtless, we should have escaped much of the scorn which has curled the lip of many a worthy professor of the exact sciences, if no such sounding appellation had ever been applied to it. It is not a science, for it has no principles of its own, and arrives at no independent conclusions; but its effect will be, if it is established, to enlarge the bounds of science, as it will enable us to explore a department of physiology which has hitherto been involved in much uncertainty—it will add another and very important link to that chain which connects the mysterious operations of matter and mind. Availing itself on the one hand of the demonstrations of the best anatomists, and on the other, putting in requisition the



results of a sound system of metaphysics, it brings these together by a mode of comparison never before tried, or at least not persisted in—deduces new conclusions respecting the constitution of that wonderful creature, Man, “part mortal clay, and part æthereal fire,” and adds a little, though it is confessed only a little, to the knowledge we possessed of the manner in which the spirit is enabled to make use of the body as its instrument. The distinction between the organs of sensation and the sensitive substance, being adopted in agreement with some of the most sagacious inquirers into the nature of mind, we proceed (for I will henceforth drop the phraseology of indifference, and identify myself with the cause I undertake to defend,) to ascribe to the brain those special functions, whatever they may be, by which it is fitted to discharge duties which mind imposes upon it; and we say that the brain performs these functions, not collectively, or through the agency of its whole mass, but discretively—one class of functions being carried on by the agency of its anterior, another by that of the superior, and a third by its posterior portion. We farther state, that this threefold division of the substance of the brain, and the corresponding classification of its functions, accord with a long recognised distinction of the human powers into natural, moral, and intellectual, and makes itself known through the propensities, sentiments and faculties in their separate and combined operation. Consider-

ing this general division established, we proceed to point out a subordinate division into separate organs, the functions of each having been ascertained, and its place assigned, and by these several organs we contend all the operations of the will, the conscience, and the understanding are effected.

Our next position is, that the capacity of each organ, or its fitness for its appropriate function, varies in a healthy state with the size of that peculiar organ, estimated both by its external developement and its length jointly. Consequently, that size may commonly, under certain modifications to be stated hereafter, be taken as a measure of the manifestation of power. But we observe, farther, that the external developements of the organ forming what have been called the convolutions of the substance of the brain, produce a corresponding impression on the inner and outer tables of the skull ; so nearly corresponding at least, that when the developements are of a very striking character, or wholly or in part wanting, a proportionate elevation or depression of the skull ensues, so clearly and definitively marked, that it may be perceived by the touch through the integuments, and gives the peculiar shape to the head.

Such is a short outline of the system of Phrenology; but, you will perceive, that by stating synthetically the results of the investigation on

which it depends, we incur the hazard of seeming to propose a theory purely speculative, made up of a string of gratuitous assumptions. Whereas the very contrary is the fact ; we contend that we have made no gratuitous assumptions, that the inquiries have been conducted on a principle of most rigorous analysis, and that if there be any true example of the application of inductive reasoning, it is to be found in the investigations of the Phrenologists.—Nor is this language too strong. If our conclusions are erroneous, they are so not from any fallacy in the reasoning employed, but from downright blunders in our observations. We must have argued from things which we could not see, as though we had seen them ; and material forms must have become distorted and mis-shapen under our very touch. Nothing less than such perversion of the senses can account for frequent and general mistake in processes of inquiry conducted as these have been, unless it be preferred to have recourse to a supposition of moral obliquities still more monstrous, viz. not merely that Gall and Spurzheim never did make the observations on which they profess to have founded their system, but that the hundreds and thousands of enquirers by whom these observations have been repeated, verified and extended, have all been deceived, or have joined in the combination to deceive others. The Reviewer is too well acquainted with the nature of evidence not to be aware that something stronger than presumptions, statements of



alleged discrepancies, or even than his favourite weapon, ridicule, will be required to overturn such a mass of testimony so brought forward. But we will reserve our remarks on the nature and value of this testimony till we come to speak of it in detail—stating, by way of recapitulation, the substance of what Phrenology professes to teach.

1.—That there are primitive mental powers, which fall under one or the other of these three classes, the propensities, the sentiments, and the faculties.

2.—That each mental power has its appropriate organ in the brain; or in other words, that the agency of each is carried on through an allotted and assignable portion of the brain, and that the manifestation of the power is proportionate, or nearly so, to the size of the organ.

3.—That the shape of the skull is conformable to that of the brain, so that the differences in the developement of the organs may be discerned by an examination of its outer surface; and that these differences are so distinctly marked that they are perceptible by the touch or even by the eye.

It was from the last of the fundamental principles here stated, that Phrenology had its beginning. Dr. Gall was led to enter on the inquiry



by observing that certain peculiarities in the shape of the skull were attended, in many instances that came under his notice, with correspondent peculiarities in the disposition, character, or understanding of the individuals. We will not follow the Doctor in those enumerations of time, place, and circumstances, of which he is so fond, when recalling to his own recollection, or stating for the information of his readers, the occasions when his attention was first drawn to the several parts of his inquiry. These enumerations are strongly marked with a character of simplicity, and carry with them a considerable weight of internal evidence to those who are not willing to brand the narrator at once as an impostor ; but their very simplicity would render them tedious, if not disgusting to the general reader. I shall endeavour, therefore, to state, shortly, the process he followed, or rather into which he was gradually and imperceptibly led. It was in the year 1796, while practising as a physician at Vienna, that he delivered his first course of lectures, his attention had early been drawn to some peculiar conformations of the skull, attended with as marked peculiarities in the character. He noted the coincidence, but made no use of it ; nor does it appear that he had any notion of the result to which he was eventually brought, until in the course of his medical practice, he was led to notice another and another such coincidence between the shape of the head and the disposition or power of the mind : but when the

idea had once suggested itself, he was of course led to give closer attention to the matter, and began to inquire whether any cause could be assigned for those peculiarities of conformation. He soon found that they were not the result of disease or accident; and, at no long interval, satisfied himself that they depended on the size and shape of the brain. This was the turning point of his discovery, (for so you must allow me to characterize it, although it was at this time no better than conjecture) as it was easy to take the next step, that of referring the differences of manifestation to the brain itself, or at least to those parts of the brain which were immediately connected with these peculiarities of external conformation. It was in this manner Dr. Gall was led to believe in the existence of primitive faculties, operating by means of the several parts of the brain, and indicated by their comparative developement. But several years passed before the discovery assumed the form of a system. He continued to make observations as opportunity arose; and, by diligent and patient inquiry, succeeded in ascertaining the position and assigning the functions of some of the organs. His desire to serve the cause of philosophical inquiry prompted him to make an early disclosure of the nature of the investigations in which he was engaged, and to invite co-operation. To this candour we have to attribute, in a great measure, the successful issue of these investigations; as, by multiplying the number of observers, materials

were rapidly furnished for establishing his inductive proofs : but this advantage was not to be obtained without cost. Such premature disclosures gave occasion for those imputations of mistake and absurdity which, though they belong only to the first crude speculations of Dr. Gall and his friends, are still freely cast upon the system in its more advanced and mature form. Yet how could it be otherwise ? the whole method of investigation was purely tentative, and if all the suppositions were recorded, as we know to be the case, there must of course be many that failed ; this, however, should not be allowed to weaken our confidence in the ultimate conclusion, when that conclusion is announced as established. Should we doubt the accuracy of the solution of an algebraical problem, because the calculator had made us acquainted with all the substitutions by which he had been led to its discovery ? Dr. Gall's early speculations on the functions of the several organs are to be considered in the light of such substitutions ; they were in themselves erroneous, but they led him onward to a knowledge of the truth.

I will not detain you by entering on any farther details of the progress of these inquiries. Dr. Spurzheim was associated with Dr. Gall about the year 1800, and one or other, or both of them, delivered lectures in Paris and in London. The system was, as we all remember, very ill received at its

first announcement. It was irreconcilable with many established opinions, and it shocked many prejudices ; while it told the anatomists they had passed by the most important facts in their demonstrations on the structure of the brain—it told the metaphysicians that they had been labouring in vain, that their whole system was founded in error, and led only to confusion. A dreadful storm was raised against the individuals who broached, and all who were induced to favour, these novel doctrines ; nor were Messrs. Gall and Spurzheim the men to lay the tempest ; they were obscure, and it was said, illiterate Germans—they had attained no celebrity even in their own professions at home, and they were now come to impose their alleged discoveries on strangers with whose very language they were but imperfectly acquainted. Then, again, the monstrous phraseology with which their system was encumbered—“the party-coloured dress of patched and pie-bald languages” in which the Doctors had clothed their speculations and discoveries. Men of taste, disgusted with their uncouth jargon, and grammarians, outraged by the wanton violation of all rules, hastened to swell the hostile ranks, and Phrenology was fairly run down ; for it was forgotten that all these things, offensive as they might be to the taste, judgment, and opinion, had really nothing to do with the truth of the facts, or the propriety of the inferences. If the system was false, no previous celebrity acquired by Dr. Gall in his



own or any other profession, could have altered its character ; if true, his ignorance on other topics ought not to stand in the way of the truth, nor ought that truth to have found less acceptance from any oddities and peculiarities of language and manner.

These were some of the causes which combined to hinder the general reception of the new doctrine, nevertheless, it did not fall to the ground ; a few persons thought they perceived in it the lineaments of truth, and wished to examine it more closely ; they soon found that the deductions it enabled them to make, accorded with their own observations and experience, and they saw, that in spite of the rude and unprepossessing aspect of the country they were entering upon, its soil was such as would repay their labour by abundant returns of knowledge. Many individuals thus impressed, communicated their views to each other, and societies were formed, first in Edinburgh, and since in many other places, not to teach Phrenology, it should be observed, but to ascertain first, whether it was worth teaching, and afterwards how it might best be taught. You will ask, perhaps, how many professors belonged to these associations of inquirers, from what chair the discoveries were announced, and in what hall the students assembled, to cheer by their acclamations, the progress of their instructor. The answer will be anticipated—we can lay claim to no such sup-

port ; professors looked coldly on our novelties, nor can we to this moment boast that the principles of Phrenology are espoused by a single accredited teacher. We should be willing enough to proclaim the fact if we knew of any such, for it would afford a very agreeable proof of the progress the views are making. But it may be urged that the want of such support ought not to be pressed as a material objection against us.—True, Phrenology has not yet been taught *à Cathedra*, in any of our Universities ; but its principles may, notwithstanding, be sound, and its discoveries important. Professors are *par metier* slow to receive alleged discoveries ; nor, indeed, can we conceive any thing more pernicious in a public teacher than a disposition to encourage a wavering sceptical spirit in his hearers, by bringing under their notice every half-formed theory and crude speculation that may happen to strike his fancy. Public teachers are, as they ought to be, habitually jealous of novelty. We respect their caution, but it must not be converted into an argument against discoveries while they are in progress towards establishment. Many important truths may be brought to light long before the system of which they form a part has received such confirmation and arrangement as would entitle it to a place in the cycle of academical instruction. All we would urge is, that it is no presumption against such truths, even though they have been in the first instance rejected by the very persons who might

seem, from station and habits of life, most competent to pronounce a right judgment upon them. I know how ridiculous it must appear to compare our speculations in physiology with those upon the system of the universe ; yet, I must ask, from what chair were the principles of true philosophy taught between the time of Galileo and Copernicus, and that of Newton. Had there been an Edinburgh Review in existence, to crush the German pretender, or the Italian dealer in novelties—who can say if we should ever have had the *Principia*. And this is the analogy we contend for—this is the real state of the question at the moment the Edinburgh Reviewer has thought proper to interfere with it. The truth, if it be the truth, (and all that I would at present say is, that confessedly its claims have not fairly been met or disproved, as no philosophical answer has been made to proofs and facts calling themselves philosophical,) is struggling for existence, and assuming gradually its suitable form and character—a wide process of inductive reasoning is carrying on—the facts, as they come under observation, are carefully noted, and from time to time brought forward with such inferences as they seem to warrant. The enquiry thus begun, and the evidence in the course of examination, in steps the Reviewer, with objections of such a nature as would have suited admirably a professor at Padua or Salamanca about the close of the 16th century, however unsuitable they may be at Edinburgh in the beginning of the 19th. He ridicules



the inquiry, because the results, if established, will run counter to received opinions ; he will have none of the proofs, because they appeal simply to the commonsense of all observers ; and holds the system up to scorn and contempt, because it has not started forth at once, complete in all its proportions, and armed for the conflict.

Our ground of complaint is against the unphilosophical tone and tendency of the whole article. The Reviewer does not say that the system of metaphysics as taught in the schools is sound or defensible ; he would not venture to maintain that anatomical investigations had reached their limit before Gall undertook his inquiries ; but he would have it supposed that the metaphysics answered the purpose, and reasonable men were satisfied with them : and, for the anatomical discoveries, instead of going boldly to satisfy himself by attending a demonstration on the brain conducted by a Phrenologist, he tries to find shelter behind the authority of a much honoured name, and insinuates that there may be unworthy trick and deception in the manner of conducting such demonstration. If the editor had ever been present and detected such trick, why does he not bring the charge on his own authority ; if he has never condescended to honour such an operation with his presence, he is at least disqualified from giving any judgment about it. What would he say to a witness who guesses, where he might have



known, and gives testimony at second hand to facts which it was every day in his power to verify.

It is vain, indeed, for the Reviewer to proclaim himself a disciple of the Baconian school, and to dose us *usque ad nauseam* with eulogies on the inductive philosophy, if he is thus to meet a fair and honest endeavour for the “advancement of learning,” and to cut off a process of induction before it has been brought to its conclusion, for no better reason, as far as I can understand, than that its progress is too slow for his impatience. We may admit that the abettors of Phrenology are as incompetent as he would willingly represent them; that their system as it now stands, is at once deficient, redundant, and incongruous; yet, if they are diligently engaged in search of truth, and if their system, with all its imperfections, has truth for its basis, they may patiently wait till the Reviewer, with his gibes and gambols, has passed away; and, in the mean time, they will not have to incur the shame of making a high profession of enlightened liberality, while they stoop to wield the meanest weapons from the armory of bigoted ignorance.

## LETTER II.

DEAR SIR,

I proceed to examine, in detail, the Reviewer's statements ; and, in the first instance, exception might be taken against the general tone of the article, and the manner of conducting the discussion. But we shall be told, perhaps, that ridicule is the legitimate weapon against absurdity ; that if the system of Phrenology be, as is alleged, utterly devoid of foundation, and contrary to all the principles of sound philosophy, it would be too much to expect a refutation of it, which, either in its form or temper, should be philosophical ; that the laws of controversial warfare are suspended in reference to a horde of contemptible irregulars, like the Phrenologists ; and that the only way to treat them, is to hunt them down wherever they are found. And, if we cannot repel the charge of absurdity, and throw back that charge on the critic himself, we must be content to submit to this : but

there is another point of objection against the Reviewer's style, to which we will not submit without remonstrance ; and that is, the levity with which, more than once, he introduces terms and forms of expression which should never be applied to any but the most solemn subjects. Thus it is considered sport to talk of Phrenology as a *revelation* to be rejected in the lump; and certain notions are spoken of as established before the *advent* of Phrenologists. The Reviewer would do well to restrain this propensity to the least defensible of all mockery : those amongst his readers who are christians, will be grieved and offended by such an application of terms, to which they attach a sense of awful importance ; and even from those who have brought themselves to reject all revelation in the lump, the bad taste of such *travesties* will meet with deserved reprobation.

It would, perhaps, be too much to expect, that the Reviewer, as a Reviewer, should sit down to a patient examination of the subject, so as to distinguish between Phrenology and Phrenologists, and note which of his objections make against the system itself, and which apply only to the manner of handling it. As a Reviewer, indeed, it was not his business thus to discriminate ; but as a philosopher, his future reputation is somewhat in jeopardy if it be found that in his hurry " to reject in the lump," he has thrown away much valuable truth ; and that

in his main argument, he is satisfied to meet facts and observations by speculative objections and reasonings *à priori*. If, in his haste to overturn the metaphysical system proposed by the Phrenologists, the Reviewer shall be found thus to have committed his reputation ; if he has knowingly passed by much truth, and set himself to oppose the progress of enquiry, by bringing against it such modes of reasoning as have in all ages been resorted to, only to perpetuate error ; we may be excused from replying, point by point, to objections diffused over nearly eighty closely printed pages of desultory discussion, and yet safely rest satisfied in our conclusion—that, be the mistakes and absurdities of Phrenologists what they may, their system will not, as the Reviewer anticipates, “ decline of itself,” nor will this lengthy article have done any thing “ to accelerate its cessation.”

That there may be much valuable truth in the system, notwithstanding all that has been brought against it, will have appeared, I think, in my former letter ; and the Reviewer himself evidently had some misgivings of this kind when he allowed at the close of his article, that Phrenology may have its use “ as a means of tempting people into a taste for reflection ;” for if it have no foundation in truth, surely the reflections for which it would give a taste, would be any thing but profitable. Would the Reviewer recommend that his youthful metaphy-



sicians should be disciplined in false and unfounded systems, by way of tempting them into a taste for truth. The Reviewer, we may suspect, saw or felt when he had made an end of his cavils, that at last there might be something in the inquiry ; his practiced acuteness could not be baffled by the sophisms he was willing to put upon others, ; and though he had resolved to reject the whole system in the lump, he could not resist an apprehension that the lump thus discarded might contain something worth preserving. But the article was written, the resolve made, and the Reviewer trusting that none of his general readers would wade through his closely printed and loosely reasoned pages, so as to sift his assertions ; boldly, should we not say blindly, sets his reputation on a chance by which, if his own statements are to be received, he cannot possibly win, inasmuch as the other party is a beggar.

How far the Reviewer has been guilty of a wilful rejection of that which he felt might be the truth, I leave to others to determine ; my main purpose is, to shew that his conclusions cannot be received, as he has set himself to put down a system which he professes not to understand, by a mode of reasoning altogether unphilosophical.

It would be vain, perhaps, to send him to Aristotle for instruction how to suit his proofs to the subject matter of his argument : but had he studied

in that school, he would not have attempted to set his "hypothetical possibilities against acknowledged certainties;" or, to meet, by speculative objections, facts ascertainable by observations and experiment. I confess I was one of those who fondly believed that we had come to an end of this sort of argument; that the improved sense of mankind (and it is pleasant to believe the sense of mankind is improved) would resist any such attempt to put down actual experiments by objections purely speculative; nor, indeed, until this notable article appeared, has such an attempt been made of late years in any work of character. Perhaps the last effort of the kind was in the case of poor Winsor, with his plans for Gas illumination. He, too, was a German projector, and all the partizans of sound philosophy and good English, were called on to make war against his monstrous innovations. "We really do very well with oil and tallow," said one; "the scheme will never answer," replied another; "it is contrary to the received laws of the motion of elastic fluids"; and, in the mean time, Winsor fixed his pipes, lit his lamps, and Pall Mall exhibited a brilliant confutation of all his opponents.

I will not stop to point out how closely the parallel holds; but, surely, it might have taught a prudent man to pause before he set himself to crush a discovery because it was announced in bad English by an obscure German, and seemed to contra-

dict some received opinions on a part of natural philosophy, but little understood. The Reviewer, however, is evidently uncomfortable in his new employment of maintaining the cause of unwarranted presumptions against proveable facts ; and he seeks, according to the method in such cases established, to stifle his disquietudes by raising a laugh.

“ If,” says he in page 256, “ it were asserted, for example, that every man detected cheating at play, would be found to have the figure of a nine of diamonds in the transverse section of the nail of his great toe, we suspect there are not many people who would think it worth while to verify the fact by experiment : but if it were added, that the said figure, though perfectly formed, was, to be sure, exceedingly small, and not to be discovered but with the aid of a particular glass—and when the section had been made at a particular angle, and the sun was in a certain position, we fancy that the discoverer would be left in the exclusive enjoyment of his creed, and that the “ science of observation ” would not attract the curiosity even of a single observer. Now, in our view of the matter, this is nearly the case with the kindred science of Phrenology, and, &c.”

The case here put, however, ingenious and ridiculous as it certainly is, happens to be altogether beside the mark. The facts to which Phrenology appeals are neither remote nor complicated ; every one who can attend a dissection may pronounce on the alleged anatomical discoveries, and every man of common sense may carry on the inductive proofs as far as is necessary to establish his own convictions.

Another presumption against the system is stated incidentally in page 296 :—

“ The fact, that after twenty years’ preaching in its favour, it is far more generally rejected than believed, might seem to afford pretty conclusive evidence against the possibility of its truth.”

Will the Reviewer favour the world by applying these new tests of truth to any established and received system he may think proper to select. The opinion of the majority ! observe of the gross majority, not of those who have considered the subject ! what would be the result, if the next time he walks down Prince’s-street, he asks every man he meets what he thinks of the theory of the nutation of the earth’s axis ; would he be guided by the opinion of the majority whether it should be rejected or believed ? Then, again, the period which is so absurdly fixed for truth to make its way, twenty years ! How would it answer to apply this new *statute of limitation* in things intellectual, not merely to the discoveries of the elder Bacon or Copernicus, but to those of Boyle or Hooke, of Schede or Cavendish ; did they obtain a general reception in twenty years ; or was it not more than twice twenty before some of the truths they taught found their way to a professor’s chair ?

But I will not imitate the Reviewer, by dwelling on extraneous topics ; rash though his presumptions



may be, and his general objections indefensible, it will be of little use to expose or refute them, if he has succeeded in essentials; as we need not try to make good the defence of the outworks, if the enemy meanwhile has carried the citadel. But there is no fear that this can have happened, as it shall be proved in the next place that the Editor has altogether misunderstood the system he professes to overturn. He supposes, or at least argues as though he supposed, that the end and object of Phrenology is nothing more than to ascertain dispositions and talents, by observing the shape of the skull, or "marking the bumps," as he elegantly terms it. He should be informed that this, though undoubtedly a practical use to which the knowledge may be applied, is by no means its end and object; it might as well be said that we study physical astronomy merely for the sake of knowing what it is o'clock. The astronomer's calculations do, indeed, enable us to be certain respecting this useful fact; but he would be justly dissatisfied if his speculations were represented as having no other object. The aim of the Phrenologist is to establish a just theory of mind, and he considers that he shall be enabled to effect this by noting the external indications, it is true; but by noting them in reference to certain principles, which through such observations he seeks to establish. It would not be easy to point out a series of mistatements more gross than may be found in p. 256.

“ It is assumed, first,” says the Reviewer, “ that the mind is made up of a number of distinct faculties, of the greater part of which no one has any consciousness or perception, and some of them, indeed, not very conceivable ; then, that these several faculties can only operate through the instrumentality of certain material organs ; next, that though all this is quite certain and not to be questioned, the mind is all the while utterly *unconscious* of being obliged to act by organs ; then, that it is nevertheless indisputable, that all these organs are parts of the brain, and nothing else ; and finally, that the force or perfection of every faculty depends entirely on the size of its peculiar organ.”

You will perceive, at once, that to give any colour to his representations, he is obliged to invert the whole process, and to represent the system as nothing better than a string of gratuitous assumptions. I will not repeat here what was said in my first letter of the process of reasoning, which really was followed out by the Phrenologists, and how they were led on to what they believe to be their discoveries, as truly as Dr. Bradley’s theory of the Aberration of Light, is to be called a discovery. The doctor observed certain appearances which the received theory did not enable him to account for ; these appearances were found to follow certain laws, he ascertained and examined these laws, and this examination enabled him to go forward till he had made out the very ingenious theory which does so much honour to his name : and, we scruple not to say that such, exactly such, have been the steps of phrenological inquiry, conducted, it is true, not by

a single philosopher in his closet, but before the world, by a crowd of inquirers, to some of whom certainly we should not assign the characteristic of *absolute wisdom*. And here, once for all, I would beg leave to disclaim the trumpery nonsense to which the name of Phrenology is attached by the ignorance and folly of many who profess to be adepts ; from the adventurous theorist in the Phrenological Magazine, who professes to account for and to remedy sea sickness by an inquiry into the functions of the organ of *weight*, down to that absurd practitioner, who advertises his merit as a teacher of youth, by announcing that he applies the callipers to their heads once a quarter. Mr. Coombe must, indeed, be sorely tired of such coadjutors and disciples ; and all that patience of thought, soundness of judgment, and energy of purpose, which he displays so remarkably in conducting the investigations of his favorite system, must, on some occasions, prove scarcely sufficient to enable him to bear with the absurdities of those who call themselves its friends. But let him go on and maintain the distinction he has so fairly won—that of taking up an inquiry which had been cast aside as worthless by those whose business it was to examine it thoroughly, and carrying it on in the intervals of a laborious profession, of having brought it so far towards completion that the editor of the *Edinburgh Review* feels called upon to exert all his strength in overturning it, and his exertion is ineffectual.



The mistake to which I shall next advert, relates to organs and their functions. Mr. Coombe defines a mental organ to be “ a material instrument, by means of which the mind, in this life, enters into certain states, both active and passive ;” and he adds, that “ Dr. Gall’s discovery directs us to the brain as a congeries of such organs.” The Reviewer meets this statement by merely begging the question.

“ Now, the only organs of which we really know any thing, and the only ones, we humbly conceive, which there is the least reason for supposing to exist, in subservience to our mental operations, are, first of all, organs of faculties ; of the precise nature of which every one is constantly and intensely conscious—they are all, exclusively, organs of external perceptions, and of the sensations immediately connected with them : the mind is perfectly and continually aware of their agency ; they are none of them merely parts of the brain, and the strength or perfection of the faculties to which they minister have no dependance on *the size* of these organs. Not only are all these things quite certain, but it is solely on account of some of them, that our external senses have been recognised as organs of perception, sensation, or any other mental affection.

“ Upon what grounds, then, can the name of organs be applied to the bumps of the Phrenologists ? or in what sense is it really intended that this name should be received in their science ? The truth we do not scruple to say is, that there is not the smallest reason for supposing that the mind ever operates through the agency of any material organs, except in its perception of material objects, or in the spontaneous movements of the body which it inhabits ; and that this whole science rests upon a postulate or assumption, for which there is neither any shadow of evidence, or any show of reasoning.”



This passage will be found to exhibit a tolerably correct abstract of the whole article ; there is in it a shew of reasoning, an apparent reference to the principles of sound philosophy ; but the application of these principles rests on unsupported assertions ; for instance, the assertion that there is not the “ smallest reason,” &c. contradicts some of the best authorities, with Newton at their head ; but these *obiter dicta* are flung in merely to give an air of authority to the rest of the passage. The question “ in what sense,” &c. must be intended to imply that the Reviewer himself is not satisfied with Mr. Coombe’s definition given above, though he leaves such readers as will receive their ideas of Phrenology through this article, under an impression that no such definition had been attempted. The Reviewer seems to think that he has made out a triumphant case, when he argues that the Phrenological organs cannot, in their mode of operation, resemble the organs of sense, and, therefore, can have no existence. If I wished to give a young student in metaphysics, an instance of the effect of contrast in the opposite modes of conducting an inquiry, I would refer him to the string of ill-considered remarks on this part of the subject, from page 256 to 260, with the plain, sound, philosophical statements on the same subject, given by Mr. Coombe in his chapter on the external senses. Indeed, I should be disposed to deny to every one the right of uttering an opinion on the question till they have made this comparison,

and upon its issue the most zealous advocates for Phrenology might be satisfied to rest the whole case. As the Reviewer makes reference to this chapter, we must suppose he had read it ; and, yet, it is hard to conceive how he could have given in to the line of argument by which he has misled his readers, and confused the mental organs with the organs of sense, if he had attended to the plain distinctions therein laid down ; that as the senses are constituted with a determinate relation to external objects, so the internal faculties are constituted with a determinate relation to the organs of sense, and the phrenological organs *may* be employed as instruments in maintaining this relation. In neither case has the mind any consciousness of the existence of the organs, or of the functions performed by them ; it can, indeed, detect certain degrees of fitness in the external organs, especially in the eye and ear, for their allotted purpose. But this fitness is external only ; no anatomist could, by dissection, discover that the optic nerve would convey a perception of visible objects, or the auditory nerve that of sounds. The objection, therefore, that specific functions ought not to be assigned to specific portions of the brain, because we cannot detect any corresponding peculiarity of organization, must fall to the ground.

It is urged, again, that there is no sort of proof that the mind, when *not percipient of matter*, acts,

or is affected by material organs of any sort ; and certainly, no proof that those organs are in the brain. Mind, acting when not percipient of matter, seems an abstraction, into which it would not be safe to follow this reasoner : but if the mind is united, as he well states, in some mysterious way, to a living and organized body, what should hinder that the brain is the seat of that union ; and though we cannot prove that it is so in the ordinary acceptation of the word proof, we can lay the grounds for a presumption so strong that few would choose to deny it, as our arguments would be precisely the same as those which are resorted to in assigning the specific functions to any part of the frame. Suppose an anatomist carrying on a dissection, finds the muscles of the arm full and well developed, he would say here are indications of great strength ; let him then examine the brain, and he finds the organ of combativeness largely developed ; what should hinder him from making a like inference as to the endowment of the faculty ? nothing, assuredly, in the nature of the thing ; it could only be said that the present state of our knowledge did not justify such an inference.

The Reviewer considers that his objections on this head are strengthened by the fact, that the external senses have no organs in the brain ; but, according to the views now stated, we have done enough when we have traced their connection with

the brain ; the inconsistency would have been, if we had found a special organ for each of them : we consider them as the telescope, the brain is the philosopher who makes use of it ; is it not enough if we establish a connection between the observer and his instrument, and would it not be quite absurd to suppose that one must be a part of the other ? This distinction being established, as between hearing, for instance, and the organ of tune, the position occupied by that organ in the brain of course matters nothing. The Reviewer seems to think the phrenologists to blame, because its external development is noted in a place he considers unsuitable, (though, by the way, he mistakes the place ; ) if Phrenology had been an invention, I have no doubt its professors would accommodate this gentleman, by placing their organs where he would like to have them ; but as we state only the results of observation, he really must be contented to take facts as he finds them.

The Reviewer is properly jealous of any new application of the term faculties, and in this jealousy he will find all cautious phrenologists ready to go along with him ; nor would there be, on the part of many amongst us, the least objection to subscribe to his doctrine, that the mind is “ one and indivisible : ” on no other supposition, indeed, can that progressive connection be established, which appears so beautiful between the mind and the material world,



through the mental powers and the perceptions operating by the phrenological organs and the organs of sense. There is, certainly, no necessity for assuming, that the mind itself is an aggregate of faculties, as the infinite variety of its manifestations may be accounted for by supposing a corresponding variety in the state or fitness of the instruments it makes use of. The phrenological organs, as we contend, are these instruments; and our assertion is, that the manifestations of mind are so dependent on these organs, that by their developement we are enabled to ascertain very exactly, both the kind and the degree of such manifestation. But to substantiate this assertion, we must go back to the question of evidence, a part of the subject in which the Reviewer has great reluctance to engage. He would be well pleased indeed, if we would put it aside altogether, and let his jokes stand instead of all testimony. Were it not so, he would not surely have amused his readers with a laboured argument on the primitive faculties, when there were facts to go to. We grant that but for this argument, we should have lost one page of very elegant, and another of very characteristic writing; the former, p. 265, giving what is called a plain exposition of familiar phenomena, and displaying the Critic's singular felicity of expression, when his subject happens to be such as he can grasp; the latter, p. 266, meant to be an exposure of the absurdities of phrenology, but which is in fact, no

better than a series of misconceptions, garnished with certain approved jocularities about bumps and protuberances. To all this misapplied argument and misrepresentation, we have this plain answer ; take the system as you find it, with all its alleged deficiencies and contradictions, and try what it will enable you to accomplish. The skeleton of Robert Bruce was, as we all know, discovered some time since at Dunfermline, with the skull uninjured. A cast was made from this skull, and copies of it are very commonly to be met with ; let any inquirer then procure one of them, and carefully note the developement, by comparing it with any good phrenological bust ; then let him ascertain what are the functions assigned by phrenologists to those organs which he finds most prominently marked, and he will find that he has recorded all the leading peculiarities of Bruce's character. This coincidence between fact and theory, cannot fail to be very striking to any observer ; but the incredulous, such as our Reviewer, will continue to talk of accidental coincidences ; let the process be repeated with the cast from the skull of Raffaele, and again the same coincidence will be observed, but the boldest doubter will not venture again to call it accidental ; he will need, perhaps, to be reminded that the Phrenologists did not find these skulls or make the casts, though they illustrate their system as completely as they could have done if made to order. But take another plain illustration, as obvious and not

less satisfactory. No Physiologist whose attention has been turned to the subject, has failed to observe the differences of conformation in the skulls of the natives of different regions. Place the skull of a Hindoo on the same table with that of a Chinese, a New Zealander, or a Carib Indian, and the most unpracticed observer will recognise at once, the difference of the developement. Let these differences be noted Phrenologically, and they will be found to correspond in all cases with the differences known to exist in the character and attainments of the several people. Given the conformation a Phrenologist will read the character ; or inversely given the national peculiarities moral and intellectual, we are prepared to demonstrate to which developement these peculiarities belong. It is to facts of this kind, that we make appeal ; instead of putting the Reviewer to the trouble of making a transverse section of the nail of his great toe, an operation, which he seems to hold in great abhorrence ; we ask him only to verify these coincidences for himself. Let him once do this, and we shall hear no more of his speculative difficulties ; his ingenuity will be employed in furthering, not in perplexing the inquiry by misconceptions and mistatements.

This, then, is our case ; we maintain that no one who will take the pains to make these observations for himself, can fail to be convinced by them that the system is true : true in the general princi-

ples it seeks to establish, and true in its practical application of these principles. Being satisfied thus far, it concerns us little to correct the Reviewer's misstatements, or to defend the mistakes into which many of the advocates for the truth undoubtedly have fallen. For, taking the Reviewer's statements in their full extent, suppose him to have proved all that he has assumed, and that the details are as deficient, redundant, and contradictory, as he thinks proper to represent them ; or, again, allowing that in those writers on Phrenology whose views are the soundest, some error and confusion may be detected ; these admissions must not be considered as affecting either the truth of the system or the value of the inquiry. All that can be said is, the inquiry is not yet completed. Phrenologists may be in error as to the exact number of the organs ; they may have still much to learn as to their respective functions ; and still they will have done much, if at the present stage of the discovery we may consider that the existence of any one primitive faculty has been ascertained, and the organ of that faculty established. But while we do not attempt to deny that much uncertainty still hangs over the inquiry, we may be satisfied to believe that the Phrenologists have got the clue which will conduct them safely through its labyrinth ; already, they have in little more than twenty years, done more towards establishing a consistent system of mental philosophy, than had been effected in more than as many centuries: they must



not, therefore, be discouraged, though much remains to be explained, and much is still to be done in making good the ground they have actually gained.

The effect of this hostile article will be to strengthen and advance their cause. It will have served to convince unprejudiced inquirers, that there must be something in a system upon which all the ingenuity and industry of the Editor of the Edinburgh Review have failed to make an impression. In the mean time, our best thanks will be due to the Reviewer, if while he has left our foundation untouched, his observations may induce us to brush away some of the absurdities which lay upon the surface. A vote of thanks from the Phrenologists may however by possibility fall short of the Reviewer's notion of the highest good. Something of good however, must accrue to him from the discussion, if it be made a lesson to him the next time he engages in an inquiry, to take care that he is animated by a real love of truth, and not by a paltry desire of keeping down certain persons whom he chooses to consider as pretenders, and whose pretensions are annoying ; it will perhaps teach him also, that if he is desirous to maintain his well earned reputation, he will not be satisfied to argue when he should have observed, or think that he can baffle confutation by raising a laugh ; and thus per-

haps, he may at length attain \**“enough of real greatness to overcome that last foible of a superior genius, the temptation of honour, which the academical exercise of wit is supposed to bring to its possessor.”*

\* Bp. Warburton.

