function resembles the ignition of metals, and the firing of gases, the decomposition of water, and the subversion of the strongest chemical affinities?” p. 165—172.

The author goes on to state his opinion, that this fiction of an invisible matter to explain the vital motions must have originated from that universal propensity of mankind to account for those phenomena, of which the causes are not obvious, by the mysterious aid of imaginary beings. Whence the ancients had gods for every operation of nature, to hurl the thunderbolt, and agitate the waves;—the people have their elves and fairies, and the theorist his Archeus, his anima, his vital fluid. These fictions are not out of place in the regions of poetry; but they deserve the reprobation which they have here received, when brought forward in the array of philosophical induction.

II.

Essays on Insanity, Hypochondriasis, and other Nervous Affections. By John Reid, M. D. Member of the Royal College of Physicians, London; and late Physician to the Finsbury Dispensary. 8vo, pp. 272. Longman and Co. 1816.

In order to give our readers some notion of the nature and character of these essays, it will be necessary to recal to their recollection the amusement which some of them may have formerly experienced from the perusal of a series of Medical Reports, as they were called, which appeared for a course of years in a popular journal, the Monthly Magazine of London, with the name of our author appended. As they were not addressed to the profession, so they uniformly discarded all grave medical discussion, and dwelt much upon the aberrations and derangements of the intellect, upon hypochondriacal and nervous disorders, and all the train of real and imaginary evils, which indolence, intemperance, and various moral and physical irregularities, committed chiefly by persons of leisure and cultivated minds, are liable to produce. Many of them, therefore, were rather moral disquisitions, than medical reports; and were delivered in brilliant metaphorical language, calculated to impress readers of this class, who would have shrunk from the perusal of mere didactic medical details. This was well enough,
under the circumstances in which these reports were originally published. They served to amuse and instruct common readers, although there was often more of dazzling impression, than just and solid information, conveyed by them. But in a work, which, from its title at least, appears to be addressed to medical men, surely something more serious and methodical, something more distinctly applicable to the study and practice of the art, was to be expected, and not a series of moral apothegms, labour-
ed with epigrammatic terseness, and clothed in all the metaphorical splendour that poetical language can bestow. No doubt the author has evinced himself a powerful, and in many in-
stances an elegant writer; and had his work been addressed to the readers of the Monthly Magazine, with an appropriate title, it would have merited and met with its due share of app-
plause.

It is but just to observe, however, that Dr Reid apologizes for having committed these essays to the press in this form; as he had considered them merely as materials towards the forma-
tion of a larger and more methodical work, which he had in-
tended to complete, on the subject of mental diseases. But some domestic circumstances, with which the public are not in-
terested, have interfered with the prosecution of that object.

After what we have said, it will scarcely be expected that we should enter into any thing like an analysis of the contents of this volume. It will be sufficient to state the nature of them generally, and to adduce a few specimens of the style of the au-
thor, and of his manner of treating the different subjects.

There are seven and twenty essays within the compass of this thin volume, which follow each other in a desultory manner, without any immediate connection, and the subjects of which are necessarily treated with a light and sweeping pen. The first is "on the Influence of the Mind on the Body;" and it is followed by others thus headed. "2. The Power of Volition."—"3. The Fear of Death."—"4. On Pride."—"5. Remorse."—"6. On Solitude."—"7. Excessive Study."—"8. Vicissi-
tude," &c. &c. In the treatment of these subjects there is generally as little that is truly medical, as in the titles of the chapters themselves. There is, however, a considerable degree of point and smartness in the statement of the objections to se-
veral popular errors, which often stands in the place of more methodical logic. Thus in the chapter "on the Power of Vo-
lation," the absurdity of attempting to laugh nervous patients out of their maladies, is pretty well exhibited.

"Nothing surely can surpass the inhumanity, as well as folly, with which patients of this class are too frequently treated. We of-
ten act upon the ill-founded idea that such complaints are altogether
dependent upon the power of the will; a notion which, in paradoxi-
cal extravagance, scarcely yields to the doctrine of a modern, though
now obsolete writer, on the philosophy of morals; who asserted,
that no one need die, if, with a sufficient energy, he determined to
live. To command, or to advise a person labouring under nervous
depression, to be cheerful and alert, is no less idle and absurd, than
it would be to command or advise a person, under the direct and most
intense influence of the sun's rays, to shiver with cold, or one who is
"swallowing naked in December's snows," to perspire from a sensa-
tion of excessive heat. The practice of laughing at, or scolding a pa-
tient of this class, is equally cruel and ineffectual. No one was ever
laughed or scolded out of hypochondriasis. It is scarcely likely that
we should elevate a person's spirits by insulting his understanding.
The malady of the nerves is in general of too obstinate a nature to
yield to a sarcasm or a sneer. It would scarcely be more prepos-
terous to think of dissipating a dropsy of the chest, than a distemper
of the mind, by the force of ridicule or rebuke. The hypochondriac
may feel indeed the edge of satire as keenly as he would that of a
sword; but although its point should penetrate his bosom, it would
not be likely to let out from it any portion of that noxious matter,
by which it is so painfully oppressed." pp. 7—9.

We are disposed to think, however, that this is not the right
way of meeting this disposition to laugh and bully nervous pa-
tients into health and complacency. For we cannot fully ac-
cord with the doctrine here delivered, and commonly maintain-
ed, that, "in the class of what are called nervous affections, it
unfortunately happens, that the very essence of the disease often
consists in a debility of the resolution; that the ailment of body
arises from an impotency of spirit, a palsy of the power of re-
sistance. A malady occasioned by the weakness of the mind is
not likely to be cured by its energy," &c. p. 17. We have little
doubt, on the contrary, that this impotency of spirit, and the
other symptoms called nervous, are invariably the result of ac-
tual corporeal disease, sometimes of structure, but commonly of
function; and upon that ground principally we deem the dispo-
sition to deride the sufferers equally preposterous, as it would be
to attempt to laugh them out of a cough or a colic. Every prac-
titioner must be aware of the long and fruitless attempts
that he has often made to rouse this "impotency of spirit" by
volatiles and stimulants; and how few sleepless nights he has
prevented by his opiates and anodynes; while some, on the
other hand, will have marked how unnecessary were such sub-
stances, when certain disturbed functions, be they of the sto-
mach, of the bowels, of the liver, or of the uterus, &c., were by
any means restored to health. Morbid sensation or morbid in-
rition, which are the result of diseased function, as well as of
diseased structure, give rise in all probability to the various
symptoms, corporeal and mental, that are usually denominated
nervous. How small an irritation may produce the most for-
midable nervous disease, it is impossible for us to calculate;
since the motions of an ascaris in the rectum will excite a gene-
ral convulsion, and a graze of the cutis even tetanus itself. How
easily therefore may all the numberless miseries and disturb-
ances of nervous patients be accounted for, from the continued
minute irritations of some labouring organ or ill-performed
function!

The other essays, the titles of which we have mentioned
above, are amusing little moral disquisitions, interspersed
with a few slight notices of cases, which are never given in detail, but
told rather in the way of anecdotes, to enliven the narrative,
than related as examples in illustration of medical precepts.
The following will serve as specimens of this story-telling style,
as well as of the passion for metaphor which abounds to excess,
and the occasional quaint conceits which occur in the midst of
otherwise good writing.

In the chapter "on Excessive Study," the author says,

"Many years ago I was consulted with respect to an idiotic man
of erudition. It was a case of idiocy arising from an overstrained
intellect. The understanding had been broken down, in consequence
of having been overloaded. The head of the patient, in its best estate,
might have been compared to a pawn-broker's shop, which is furnish-
ed principally with other people's goods; a repository merely for
ideas, not a soil out of which an idea ever grew." p. 63.

This is the whole case; and again, in the essay "on Vicissi-
tude," he says,

"I recollect the case of an unfortunate young man who became
a victim to the disastrous issue of a variety of mercantile adventures.
The same blow which deranged his affairs, produced a disorder of his
reason. His finances and his faculties fell together. The phantoms
of imagination indeed survived, and seemed to hover over the ashes
of his understanding. The demon of speculation, which had before
mised his mind, now possessed it entirely. His projecting spirit,
which was always more than moderately intrepid, took, in the mania-
cal exaltation of his fancy, a still bolder and sublimer flight." p. 70.

Possibly we may have more than satisfied our readers of the
justice of the strictures with which we set out. As there are
some chapters, however, which bear more of a medical aspect,
in the subjects which they present to us, we may inquire if any
thing more practical is to be obtained under the heads, "Want
of Sleep"—"Intemperance"—"Morbid Affections of the Organs of Sense"—"Physical Malady, the occasion of Mental Disorder."—"Dyspeptic and Hepatic Diseases"—"Palsy, Idiocy, Spasmodic and Convulsive Affections," &c.

In the Essay on Want of Sleep, which is brief, we meet with the same general phraseology, and only one piece of medical advice; viz. a recommendation of "the use of cold or warm bath," as a remedy for wakefulness, when all the medicinal and dietetic opiates had been resorted to in vain. The Essay "on Intemperance," which is long, exhibits a picturesque account of the effects of stimulation on the frame, which may be useful to those who have not already drank deep in the cup. The author observes, "the idea of a short life and a merry one," is plausible enough, if it could be generally realized. But unfortunately what shortens existence is calculated also to make it melancholy.—"The slope towards the grave, these victims of indiscretion find no easy descent. The scene is darkened long before the curtain falls. Having exhausted prematurely all that is delicious in the cup of life, they are obliged to swallow afterwards the bitter dregs. Death is the last, but not the worst result of intemperance," p. 83. He remarks that intemperance, however, is in a certain sense a relative thing. "Pope said that more than one glass of wine was to him a debauch." The mischief varies according to the constitution of the individual. In treating of the "Morbid Affections of the Organs of Sense," there is the same absence of medical information and practical precept; indeed the author seems to confound cause and effect, and is rather disposed to refer general nervous diseases to the derangements of the organs of sense, instead of ascribing both to disordered health.

"Inflammation or debility of the eye," he says, "cannot but be produced by the excessive or unreasonable exercise of it, and the diseased state of that organ is likely to be communicated by sympathy to the brain in particular, and in many instances, even to the whole nervous system. Hence from an injury, often apparently unimportant, inflicted upon the delicate instrument of vision, hysteria, epilepsy, hypochondriasis, and even absolute and obstinate melancholy, have not unfrequently originated." p. 122.

This piece of extraordinary pathology, together with a few desultory anecdotes respecting impaired hearing, constitutes the essay in question. The fourteenth Essay, entitled "Physical Malady, the occasion of Mental Disorder," merely informs us, that a poor woman, at a certain critical period, was for a short time delirious, "fancied that she saw her bed encompassed with
a legion of devils, impatient to hurry her to eternal torments:—she derided medicine, and obstinately and haughtily resisted its application,—till a change took place. And the essay concludes with a few unconnected apothegms about the materialism, scepticism, and dogmatism, that arise among medical men, from their habit of observing the influence of physical causes upon the mental powers.

After a short notice of the "second-hand atmosphere of London," every draught of which, that you take, has probably been "in some other person's lungs before," the author treats, in his usual flourishing manner, of "Dyspeptic and Hepatic Diseases," in his sixteenth Essay. In this he is employed in depicting the "hard labour" which the epicure imposes on his stomach; in pointing out the gormandizing advantages of the wealthy to their own destruction; and in recommending, if not religious, at least civil facts, which may "give to the stomach a periodical holiday, and afford an occasional respite from the daily drudgery of digestion." p. 142. He then briefly notices the symptoms of hepatic obstruction, which he considers as much more frequently the effect of a broken constitution, than an independent malady, and affirms, that, "on this account it is not altogether by the remedies which seem to have a particular operation upon this organ, that its irregularities are to be corrected, or its obstructions to be removed, but in a great measure by those other medicines and methods of treatment, that are calculated to restore lost tone to the general fibre, or to prop for a period the tottering pillars of the frame." p. 142. We thought that this Brunonian notion of settling the chief part of medical practice in the administration of tonics, which we conceive to be one of the most pernicious doctrines that ever was promulgated, had been pretty safely deposited in the tomb of all the Capulets. If we were unphilosophical enough to impose any universal law of physic, we believe something the very opposite of this tonic system would be on the whole infinitely more beneficial. Surely all acute diseases, and nine-tenths of chronic ones, are improved by abstinence from excitement of every description.

The Essay on "Palsy, Idiocy, &c." consists chiefly of melancholy reflections, on the miserable changes which these maladies produce, and dismal relations of several paralytic and idiotic anecdotes, which no doubt will be esteemed singularly pathetic by certain readers; and then we have three essays of like qualities on "the Hereditary Nature of Madness,"—"On old Age,"—and "on Lunatic Asylums." The first of these is chiefly occupied in declaiming against the crime of matrimony in any one who is aware of a decided bias in his own person.
towards insanity. "No rites, however holy, can, under such circumstances, consecrate the conjugal union."

"The ruffian who fires at the intended object of his plunder, takes away the life of him only at whom his aim is levelled. The bullet which penetrates the heart of the unfortunate victim, does in general no farther mischief. But he who inflicts upon a single individual the worse than deadly wound of insanity, knows not the numbers to which its venom may be communicated; he poisons a public stream out of which multitudes may drink; he is the enemy, not of one man, but of mankind." p. 186.

After these little flights, we settle upon something that has a more medical aspect, viz. on two essays entitled, "Bleeding," and "Pharmacy." The former is chiefly employed in cautioning us against the vague and empirical notion of the indiscriminate utility, in this class of diseases, of the lancet,—"that minute instrument of mighty mischief;" and the cautions are judicious; as are also the strictures on some abuses in the administration of drugs, which constitute the principal topics of the following Essay. He particularly animadverts on the impurity of prolonging a medicinal course, during the convalescence from acute diseases, after the natural desire for wholesome and substantial food has returned; and also upon the neglect of simplicity in the combination of medicines.

There is nothing in the remaining essays on "Ablution,"—"Bodily Exercise,"—and "Occupation," to cause us to prolong our review. Perhaps, indeed, our readers may opine, that we have already dwelt too long upon a work, which can scarcely be supposed to have been addressed to the profession; and which is obviously calculated, by its studied display of polished composition, and by its unvarying appeals to the imagination instead of reason, to amuse the general reader, and not to instruct the medical inquirer, or to add anything to the existing stock of medical knowledge.

III.

Chemie thierischer Stoffe.—Tübinger Blätter für Naturwissenschaften und Arzneykunde; herausgegeben von J. H. F. v. Athenrieth, und J. G. F. v. Bohnenberger. 1. Band. 3. Stück. 8vo. Tübingen, 1815.

The article which we now propose to lay before our readers, is rather an abridgment of an analysis of three inaugural dissertations, published at the University of Tübingen, than an.