

**CHANGES PRODUCED IN
THE NERVOUS SYSTEM
BY CIVILIZATION**

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Changes produced in the nervous system by civilization by Robert Verity

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ROBERT VERITY

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CHANGES

PRODUCED IN

THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

BY

CIVILIZATION,

CONSIDERED ACCORDING TO THE EVIDENCE OF PHYSIOLOGY
AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY.

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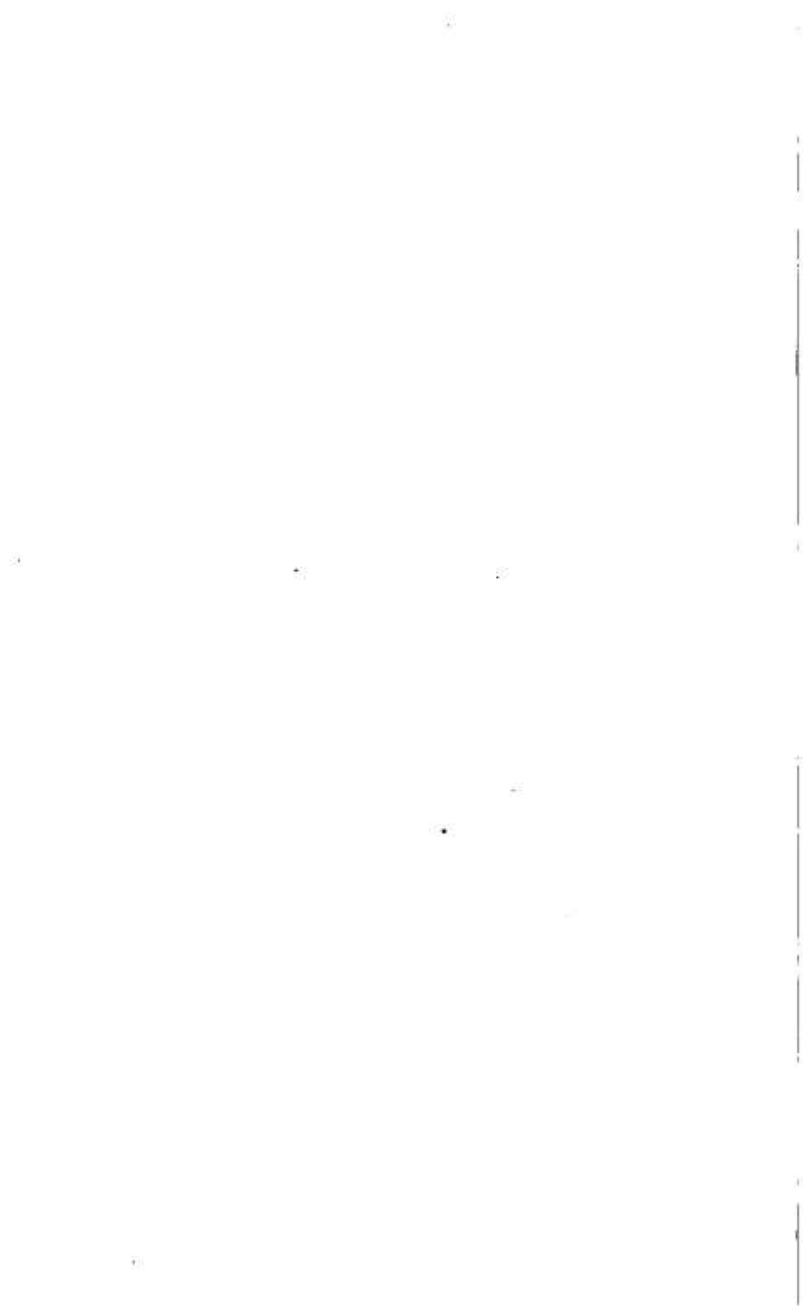
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P R E F A C E.

THE following pages were originally intended as an introductory essay to some views on the Principles of Medicine, considered in relation to the modified type of temperament produced by the increasing proportion of the nervous element in the organization of individuals, who are fair representatives of the high civilization of modern times; but as these introductory pages may be said to contain within themselves a subject of philosophic interest, both to the Historian and Statesman, as well as to the Physician, it has been thought advisable to publish them in a separate form, with the intention, at some subsequent period, of carrying out the more medical part of the work to the extent of the original design.

PARIS,
Nov. 1, 1837.



CHANGES

PRODUCED IN

THE NERVOUS SYSTEM.

I. THE highest physiological authorities of modern times agree in maintaining that the General Nervous System is an absolutely necessary condition for the manifestation of the many kinds of activity, animal, moral and intellectual, which take place in the human subject; and it has been regarded with great truth as a characteristic feature of these later times that the superior functions of this system have been universally expressed with a plenitude, extension, and energy hitherto unrecorded in the history of man. It is proposed to show in the following pages, by logical deduction from these grounds, as well as by historical and physical evidence, that there largely obtains a close and invariable parallelism of increase and expansion

between these various activities of the human economy, and their organic physiological conditions; that in proportion as the former become enhanced, so do the latter become developed, and reciprocally; that according as one species of activity more than another predominates in the life of the human individual, so also does the corresponding organic element, subserving this, become in its turn amplified and more appreciable; that individuals, in fact, undergo modification in the constituent tissues of their bodies, according to the particular kind of activity which governs and habitually prevails. In some it will be the animal and organic, from high proportional endowment of the muscular system, visceral organs, and ganglionic nerves; in others, it will be that of a higher kind, and more characteristically human, from the volume and quality of the great nervous centres, the former being fit types of the semi-civilization of more remote times; the latter, types of our own. And from the superior nervous activities eminently characterising our present times, it necessarily follows, that we may expect to find, in all individuals who are fair representatives of the higher type, a predominance of the corresponding organic con-

ditions, over those of lower grade, in the nervous system; that these individuals, in fact, are to be distinguished by marked and important differences, both in the quality and relative proportions of the tissues composing their organization, from those having existed in antecedent epochs of an embryotic and ruder civilization, in which the tastes and habits of society partook much more of organic and animal activity. A clear perception of these differences in all their bearings upon the working of the economy is, indeed, of vital importance in estimating the political and intellectual value of individual men, and of national character, and in rightly appreciating all complicated pathological states of the body; and many mischievous effects must ever have happened from a gross and indiscriminating ignorance on these points, fatally misapprehending the delicate and freely re-acting sympathies of a high-wrought organisation.

II. Having so far taken into consideration the evidence necessary to establish the principle, that there obtains a finer and more abundant endowment of the purely nervous tissues amongst the constituent elements of the human physical constitution, in proportion as civilization advances, the