

content itself with the known and the knowable. Practice is placed face to face with the unknown and the unknowable.¹ Thus the question will again and again be asked, "What is life?" And for the benefit or injury of mankind theories will exist which profess to handle this delicate problem successfully, even as weather-prophets will always exist though the necessary knowledge for accurate prediction is still wanting.

8.
Practice
urges the
question:
What is
Life?

One of the first in time and eminence in the course of the nineteenth century to whom we are indebted, not

9.
Bichat.

¹ See what Theod. Bischoff, one of the first and foremost German anatomists of the new school, says in his *Éloge of Liebig* (München, 1874), p. 60. "Inorganic science is not any way induced and is much less obliged to forsake the road from the known to the unknown. But what would have been the result, what would still be the result, if, in all our researches into organised nature, and yet more in all our actions which have reference to our state of health or ill-health, we had proceeded, or were now to proceed, only from data firmly established as to cause and connection? Could we then so much as take a morsel into our mouths or treat a cold otherwise than with fear and trembling? Physiologists and doctors have surely always been ready to proceed according to the methods of exact science so far as this was developed. But so long as this gave but a stone instead of bread, acceptance could not be thought of; necessity compelled us to make some attempt towards the solution of questions, to invent some language in order to gain an understanding; and through this frequently an erroneous procedure has arisen which outlives the means for its correction." "Physiology,"

says Du Bois-Reymond (*Éloge of Joh. Müller, 'Reden,'* vol. ii. p. 199), "is the only science in which one is obliged to speak about things which one does not know. Chemistry need not treat of unknown compounds, nor physics of undiscovered forces; botany and zoology do not mind what kind of animals may still move about unknown among unknown vegetation in unexplored regions. But in physiology, even if we confine ourselves to man, a definite number of things is given which must be dealt with. The spleen, the thyroid gland, the thymus, the suprarenal capsules; many parts of the brain, ganglia, nerves, the labyrinth of the ear—all these are there, and must, according to the customary view, be there for something. Manifold suppositions as to the functions of these parts, seemingly supported or invalidated by pathological experience, have put in the place of absolute darkness a twilight which is richer in delusions though not in certainty. The expounder of our science is obliged to lead his pupils through this twilight on an anxious path, and then meet in return with that discouragement which really is owing to the subject itself."