

P R E F A C E.

WHEN I first signified my intention of publishing the following sheets, I was told by my friends it would draw on me the resentment of the whole faculty. As I never could entertain such an unworthy idea of physicians, I was resolved to make the experiment, which indeed came out pretty much as might have been expected. By the more selfish and narrow-minded part of the faculty, the performance was condemned; while many of those whose learning and liberality of sentiments do honor to medicine, received it in a manner which at once showed their indulgence, and the falsehood of the common opinion, *that all physicians wish to conceal their art.*

The reception which the book met with from the public was still more flattering, and deserves my most grateful acknowledgments. A persuasion that such a performance might be useful, and was even wished for by the public, encouraged me to print a large impression; but my most sanguine expectations could never have suggested that above five thousand copies would have been sold in a corner of Britain before another edition could be got ready.

A sense of gratitude, which public approbation seldom fails to inspire, induced me to bestow some pains to make the book more generally useful, by enlarging the *Prophylaxis*, or that part which treats of preventing diseases, and likewise adding several diseases which were entirely omitted in the former impression. This inevitably retarded the publication of the second edition, and has likewise drawn it out to a greater length than could have been wished; but these inconveniences will, I hope, be excused, as the book is certainly rendered less incomplete.

The observations relative to nursing and the management of children were chiefly suggested by an extensive practice among infants, in a large branch of the Foundling Hospital, where I had an opportunity not only of treating the diseases incident to childhood, but likewise of trying the different plans of nursing, and observing their effects. Whenever I had it in my power to place the children under the care of proper nurses, to instruct these nurses in their duty, and to be satisfied that they performed it, very few of them died; but when, from distance of place, and other unavoidable circumstances, the children were left to the sole care of mercenary nurses, without any one to instruct or superintend them, scarce any of them lived.

This was so apparent as, with me, to amount to a proof of the following melancholy fact: *that almost one half of the human species*

perish in infancy, by neglect or improper management. This reflection has made me often wish to be the happy instrument of alleviating the miseries of those suffering innocents, or of rescuing them from an untimely grave.

The application of medicine to the various occupations of life was likewise chiefly the result of observation. An extensive practice for several years, in one of the largest manufacturing towns in England, afforded me sufficient opportunities of observing the injuries which those useful people sustain from their particular employments, and likewise of trying various methods of obviating such injuries. The success which attended these trials was sufficient to encourage this attempt, which we hope will be of use to those who are under the necessity of earning their bread by such employments as are unfavorable to health.

I do not mean to intimidate men, far less to insinuate that even those arts, the practice of which is attended with some degree of danger, should not be carried on; but to guard the less cautious and unwary against those dangers which they have it in their power to avoid, and which they often, through mere fool-hardiness, incur. As every occupation in life disposes those who follow it to some particular diseases more than to others, it is certainly of importance to know these, in order that people may be upon their guard against them. It is always better to be warned of the approach of an enemy than to be surprised by him, especially where there is a possibility of avoiding the danger.

The observations concerning diet, air, exercise, &c., are of a more general nature, and have not escaped the attention of physicians in any age. They are subjects of too great importance, however, to be passed over in an attempt of this kind, and can never be sufficiently recommended. The man who pays a proper attention to these will seldom need the physician, and he who does not will seldom enjoy health, let him employ as many physicians as he will.

In the treatment of diseases, I have been peculiarly attentive to regimen. The generality of people lay too much stress upon medicine, and trust too little to their own endeavors. It is always, however, in the power of the patient, or of those about him, to do as much towards his recovery as can be effected by the physician. By not attending to this, the designs of medicine are often frustrated; and the patient, by pursuing a wrong plan of regimen, not only defeats the doctor's endeavors, but renders them dangerous. I have often known patients killed by an error in regimen, when they were using very proper medicines. It will be said, the physician always orders the regimen when he prescribes a medicine. I wish it were so, both for the honor of the faculty and the safety of their patients; but physicians, as well as other people, are too little attentive to this matter.

Though many reckon it doubtful whether medicines are more beneficial or hurtful to mankind, yet all agree in allowing the necessity and importance of a proper regimen in diseases. Indeed the very appetites of the sick prove its propriety. No man in his senses ever imagined that a person in a fever, for example, could eat, drink, or conduct himself in the same manner as one in perfect health. This part of medicine, therefore, is evidently founded in nature, and is every way consistent with reason and common sense. Had men

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been more attentive to it, and less solicitous in hunting after secret remedies, medicine had never become an object of ridicule.

Indeed this seems to have been the first idea of medicine. The ancient physicians acted chiefly in the character of nurses. They went very little beyond aliment in their prescriptions; and even this they generally administered themselves, attending the sick, for that purpose, through the whole course of the disease; which gave them an opportunity not only of marking the changes of diseases with great accuracy, but likewise of observing the effects of their different applications, and adapting them to the symptoms.

The learned Dr. Arbuthnot asserts, that by a proper attention to those things which are almost within the reach of every body, more good and less mischief will be done in acute diseases than by medicines improperly and unseasonably administered; and that great cures may be effected in chronical distempers by a proper regimen of the diet only. So entirely do the doctor's sentiments agree with mine, that I would advise every person ignorant of physic to confine his practice solely to diet and the other parts of regimen; by which means he may often do much good, and can seldom do any hurt.

To render the book more generally useful, however, as well as more acceptable to the intelligent part of mankind, I have, in most diseases, besides regimen, recommended some of the most simple and approved forms of medicine, and added such cautions and directions as seemed necessary for their safe administration. No doubt it would have been more acceptable to many, had it abounded with pompous prescriptions, and promised great cures in consequence of their use; but this was not my plan. I think the administration of medicines always doubtful, and often dangerous, and would much rather teach men how to avoid the necessity of using them, than how they should be used.

There are, however, several medicines, and those of considerable efficacy, which may be administered with great freedom, and at the same time with safety. Physicians generally trifle a long time with medicines before they come to know how to use them. Many peasants at present know better how to use some of the most important articles in the *materia medica* than physicians did a century ago; and doubtless the same observation will hold with regard to others some time hence. Wherever we were convinced that medicine might be used with safety, or where the cure depended chiefly upon it, we have taken care to recommend it; but where it was either highly dangerous, or not very necessary, it is omitted.

I have not troubled the reader with a useless parade of quotations from different authors, but have nevertheless made use of their observations where my own were either defective or totally wanting. Those to whom I have been most obliged were Remazina, Arbuthnot, Brookes, Cheyne, Mackenzie, and Tiffot; the last of which, in his *Avis au Peuple*, comes the nearest to my plan of any author which I have seen. Had Dr. Tiffot's plan been as complete as the execution is masterly, we should have had no occasion for any new treatise of this kind soon; but by confining himself to the acute diseases, he has, in my opinion, left out the most useful part of his subject. People in acute diseases may sometimes be their own physicians, but in the chronic the cure must ever depend chiefly upon the patient's own

endeavors. The doctor has also passed over the *Prophylaxis*, or preventive part of medicine, very slightly, though it is certainly of the greatest importance in such a performance. He had, no doubt, his reasons for so doing, and we are so far from finding fault with him, that we think his performance does great honor both to his head and to his heart.

I know some of the faculty disapprove of every attempt of this nature, imagining that it would totally destroy their influence. But this notion appears to me to be as absurd as it is illiberal. People in distress will always apply for relief to men of superior abilities, when they have it in their power; and they will do this with far greater confidence and readiness when they believe that medicine is a rational science, than when they take it to be only a matter of mere conjecture. I am far, however, from blaming any man because he differs in opinion from me. Every man has certainly a right to think and act in these matters as he pleases, nor shall any one ever be able to draw me into a dispute upon this subject.

All I shall say with regard to the following treatise is, that I have endeavored to make it plain and useful, and as accurate as my necessary avocations would permit. The language indeed is far from being so correct as I could have wished; but where utility is the aim, even critics are seldom disposed to censure an author for a few inaccuracies of style. Such as read the book with a view to this kind of criticism, will find matter enough, and I shall be far from despising their observations; but, as I would still wish to render the performance more generally useful, I shall esteem every man my friend who will be so kind as to point out any thing that may contribute to that purpose.

It was impossible to avoid some terms of art; but such as are made use of are, in general, either explained, or are such as most people understand. In short, I have endeavored to write down to the capacities of mankind in general, and, if my readers do not flatter either themselves or me, with some degree of success. This, however, on a medical subject, is not such an easy matter as some may imagine. It is easier to make a show of learning than to write plain sense, especially in a science which has been kept at such a distance from common observation. It would, however, be no difficult matter to prove, that every thing valuable in the practical part of medicine is within the reach of common sense, and that the art would lose nothing by being stripped of all that any person endued with ordinary abilities cannot comprehend.