

P R E F A C E

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE object of the Author, in preparing the present work for the press, has been to supply the Medical Student with a class book on *Materia Medica*, containing a faithful outline of this department of Medicine, and embracing a concise account of the most important modern discoveries in Natural History, Chemistry, Physiology, and Therapeutics, in so far as they pertain to Pharmacology. These subjects he has treated of in the order of their natural-historical relations. This method he has followed for many years past in his Lectures, believing it to be the most convenient and, on the whole, the least objectionable mode of classifying the objects of Pharmacology: and he is glad to find that some of the most eminent professors (among whom he may mention his friends Drs. Christison and Royle,) follow a similar order in their lectures. Hitherto, however, no systematic work has been published in the English language in which this order has been adopted.¹

It must be admitted, that, as the ultimate object of all our inquiries into the *Materia Medica* is the attainment of a knowledge of the physiological effects and therapeutical uses of medicines, an arrangement founded on the effects and uses would be much more valuable to the medical student than one based on proper-

¹ The *Therapeutic Arrangement and Syllabus of Materia Medica*, by J. Johnston, M. D. can hardly be regarded as constituting an exception to this statement.

ties only indirectly related to those for which the agents possessing them are employed. For it would enable him more readily to practise on general indications, and to substitute one remedy for another, belonging to the same class or order. Under this point of view, the author is fully impressed with the value of a physiological or therapeutical arrangement of medicines, and, could it be effected, would readily acknowledge its vast superiority, considered in a medical point of view, over all other classifications: but he is of opinion that Pharmacologists are too imperfectly acquainted with the operation of Therapeutical agents to enable them to effect a classification of this kind with much success. Scarcely two medicines give rise to precisely the same effects: and, as we are unable to determine the nature of the modification produced by each, "it is impossible to bring the substances used in medicine under a general good arrangement."¹ Every writer, who has attempted it, has found the facts hitherto ascertained insufficient for his purpose, and has, therefore, been necessarily obliged to call in the aid of theory: hence the so-called physiological classifications of medicines are in reality founded on the prevailing medical doctrines of the day, or on the peculiar notions of the writer.

Opium and mercury may be referred to in illustration of the author's meaning. They are substances in ordinary use, and their effects are well known. Yet writers are neither agreed as to the nature of the primary influence which these agents exercise over the animal economy, nor as to their proper position in a physiological classification.

Thus several physicians (as Dr. John Murray² and Dr. A. T. Thomson³) consider opium to be primarily stimulant; some (as Dr. Cullen⁴ and Barbier⁵) regard it as a sedative; one (Mayer⁶) as both—viz., a stimulant to the nerves and circulatory system, but a sedative to the muscles and digestive organs; another (Orfila⁷) as neither; while others (as Müller⁸) call it alterative.

¹ *Elements of Physiology*. By J. Müller, M. D.; translated by W. Baly, i. 57.

² *A System of Materia Medica and Pharmacy*. 5th ed. 1828. Edinburgh.

³ *Elements of Materia Medica and Therapeutics*. 2 vols. London. 1832.

⁴ *Treatise of the Materia Medica*. 2 vols. Edinburgh. 1787.

⁵ *Traité Élémentaire de Matière Médicale*. 2^{de} éd. Paris. 1824.

⁶ Quoted by Orfila (*Toxicologie Générale*.)

⁷ *Toxicologie Générale*. 3^{me} éd. 1827. 2 tom. Paris.

⁸ *Op. cit.*

Again, mercury is by several writers (as Drs. Cullen,¹ Chapman,² Young,³ and Eberle⁴) placed in the class of sialogogues; by many (as Dr. A. T. Thomson,⁵ MM. Edwards and Vavasseur,⁶ and MM. Trousseau and Pidoux⁷) among excitants; by some (as Conradi, Bertele, and Horn⁸) it is considered to be sedative; by one (Dr. Wilson Philip⁹) to be stimulant in small doses, and sedative in large ones; by some (as Dr. John Murray¹⁰) it is placed among tonics; by another (Vogt¹¹) among the *resolventia alterantia*; by one (Sundelin¹²) among the liquefacients (*verflüssigende Mittel*); by the followers of Broussais (as Begin¹³) among revulsives; by the Italians (as Giacomini¹⁴) among contra-stimulants or hyposthenics; by others (as Barbier¹⁵) among the *incertæ sedis*!

The author is fully aware of the objections which some will be disposed to raise to the natural-historical and chemical details contained in this work. But with due deference to the opinion of others, he thinks the absence of these subjects would render the present volumes incomplete. A knowledge of them, it is true, is not essential to the successful practice of our profession; but surely a physician will not make a worse practitioner because he is acquainted with the natural history and chemistry of the agents he is employing in the treatment of disease. The author is not ambitious to raise into unnecessary importance these topics; yet he cannot help expressing his belief, that they, who are the loudest in decrying the value and utility of natural history and chemistry to the medical practitioner, are those, for the most part, whose information on these points is most limited.

In drawing up the Historical and Bibliographical Table, the author thinks it but justice to acknowledge the assistance he has received:—In the Hindoo De-

¹ *Op. cit.*

² *Elements of Materia Medica and Therapeutics.* 2 vols. 4th ed. Philadelphia, 1825.

³ *An Introduction to Medical Literature*; art. *Pharmacology.* 2d ed. London, 1823.

⁴ *Treatise on Materia Medica and Therapeutics.* 2 vols. 2d ed. Philadelphia, 1825.

⁵ *Op. cit.*

⁶ *Manuel de Matière Médicale.* Paris, 1831.

⁷ *Traité de Thérapeutique*, tom. i. Paris, 1836.

⁸ Quoted by Richter (*Ausführliche Arzneimittellehre*, Bd. v. 307. 1830.)

⁹ *On the Influence of Minute Doses of Mercury.* London, 1834.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*

¹¹ *Lehrbuch der Pharmakodynamik.* 2 Bd. 2te Aufl. Giessen, 1828.

¹² *Handbuch der speciellen Heilmittellehre.* 3te Aufl. Berlin, 1833.

¹³ *Traité de Thérapeutique.* Paris, 1825.

¹⁴ *Trattato filosofico-sperimentale dei Soccorsi Terapeutici.* Padova, 1833.

¹⁵ *Op. cit.*

partment, from his friend, Professor Royle; in Scandinavian Pharmacological Literature, from Dr. Holst, Professor in the University of Christiania; in the American department, from Dr. Wood, Professor of Materia Medica and Pharmacy in the University of Pennsylvania,—to all of whom his best thanks are justly due.

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