

**A description of the influenza : with its distinction and method of cure / by  
R. Hamilton, M.D. and Fellow of the Royal Medicinal Society of Edingburgh.**

**Contributors**

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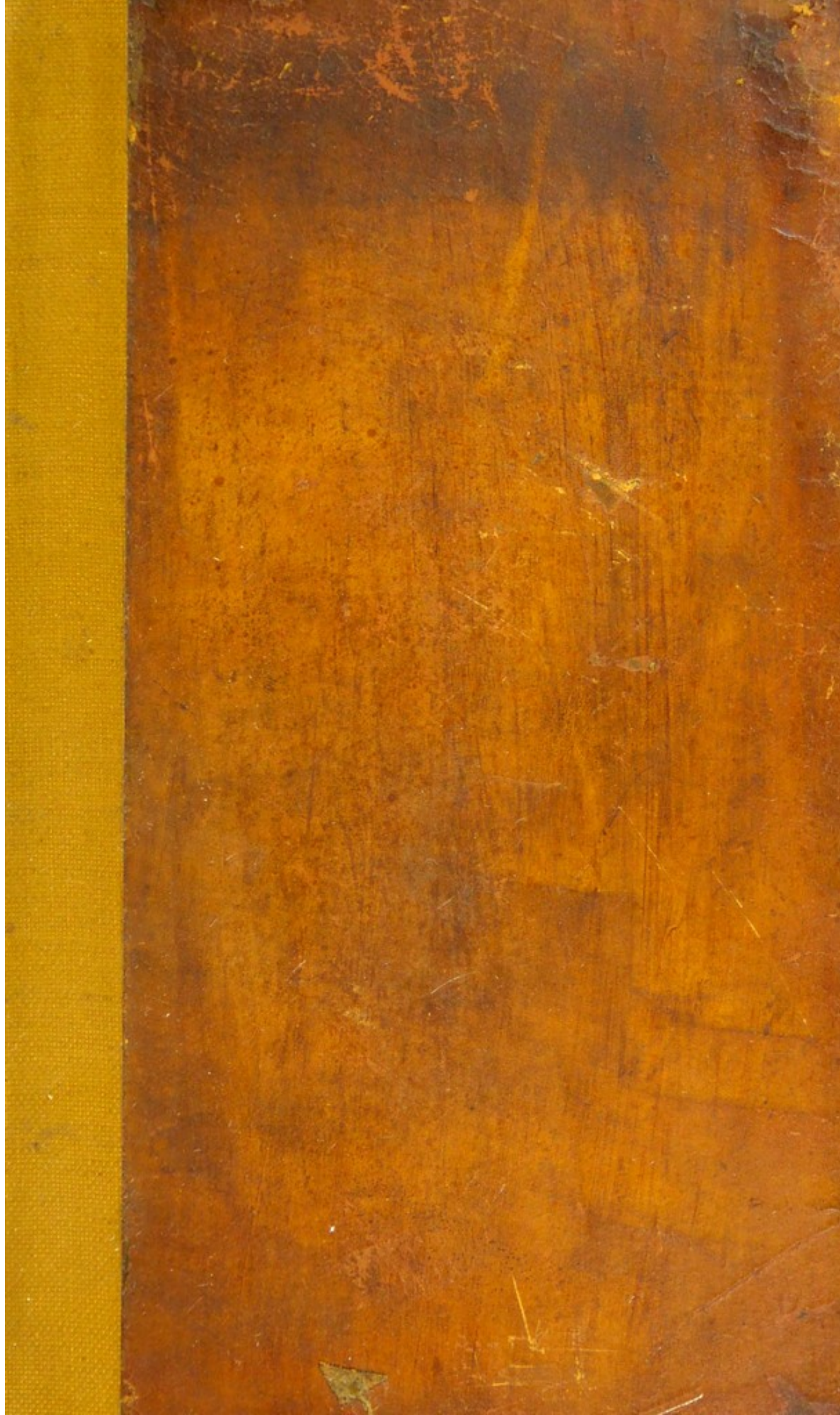
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A  
DESCRIPTION  
OF THE  
INFLUENZA;

WITH ITS  
DISTINCTION  
AND  
METHOD OF CURE.

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By R. HAMILTON, M. D.

AND

Fellow of the Royal Medicinal Society of EDINBURGH.

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L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, No. 72, ST. PAUL'S  
CHURCH-YARD.

1782.

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DESCRIPTION

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INFLUENZA

DISTINCTION

METHOD OF CURE.

By R. HAMILTON, M.D.

Fellow of the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, at the Strand, near St. Paul's Church-yard.

1822.

DESCRIPTION  
OF  
T O  
LIEUTENANT COLONEL CATHCART,  
of the 10th Regiment of Foot,

The following Pages, relative to a Disease that  
very lately raged with much Severity among  
both the Officers and Men under his Com-  
mand, are most respectfully dedicated

By his much obliged,

And very humble Servant,

THE AUTHOR.



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A

DESCRIPTION

OF THE

INFLUENZA.

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THE inclemency and backwardness of the season has been remarked by some of the oldest people alive, to be the greatest in their remembrance. The spring proved exceedingly cold, which checked vegetation, and in several parts of Scotland, numbers of cattle perished for want, as neither fodder nor grass could be procured for money; many were killed for the same reason. Our accounts from Plymouth are nearly similar.



A gentleman, who took for several months past an exact account of the state of the weather, assures us he found the thermometer stand one degree lower on the 22d of May, than it did on the 22d of the preceding December ; and that on Christmas-day last, and Whitsunday, it stood precisely at the same height ; for three months we have scarcely enjoyed a single day, more or less, without rain.

About three weeks ago there was a dreadful thunder storm ; the morning shone bright, and the day warm, till about 12, when it lowered on a sudden. The lightning and thunder were remarkable, accompanied with a shower of large hail stones. I took up some as they fell, and examined their size, but did not measure them ; yet am persuaded they would have measured upwards of half an inch round ; the thunder lasted more than half an hour, and  
the



the hail continued to fall about a quarter or twenty minutes. It did not, however, spread to any great distance, for five miles from this, no hail was perceived.

Since this it has thundered frequently, but the most remarkable was about the 24th of May. It began in the evening, a little before sun-set, and continued at least for two hours. The thunder at this place, however, was less remarkable than the lightning; I stood with a gentleman here to observe it nearly the whole time of its continuance. Preceding the thunder, it was a dead calm, and the day likewise by far the warmest we had experienced for a length of time before.

There was something awfully beautiful in the lightning. It did not appear in flashes in general, but in large balls, one rolling after another over the heavens



northward of us, and now and then dashing one against another, driving off large sparks, producing a great and sudden glance, which enlightned the street of the village for an instant, as if the sun had shone forth ; yet the thunder was at a considerable distance, as we could easily ascertain by the interval between the lightning and the peal. From this we concluded ourselves in no danger, and stood with the less concern to view the uncommon appearance it produced.

We presaged, that over the places where the fire balls past, there must be damage sustained, and almost the next post confirmed our suspicions ; for not only houses were burned, but several persons lost their lives, and many trees were shattered to pieces.

Nearly about the same time the Influenza made its appearance in London, and the  
country



country round. It spread in a few days with great rapidity, infomuch, that a phyfician of extenfive practice in the city, is faid to have vifited no lefs than one hundred and feven patients labouring under it in one day.

At St. Alban's it foon became prevalent; the foldiers that lay there feemed to be the firft victims of its fury. Out of three companies quartered in that town, fcarcely a fingle man was fit to do duty—the officers fuffered in like proportion; for one only efaped the complaint.

In the neighbouring towns it raged with no lefs feverity. I have feen feven in one family, nine in another, five in a third, and in a fourth eleven feized with it. We had accounts, that in Sir Patrick Blake's family fifteen laboured under it; and in the Duke  
of



of Marlborough's, no fewer than twenty-seven.

This is allowed to be one of the widest spreading epidemics in the whole catalogue of diseases. It is not confined to those on land ; at sea it rages with equal fury. The accounts we have from the fleet, confirm this remark. It is said, that 400 of one ship's company, and 300 of another, came lately on shore ill of it ; nor does it seem to be confined to the human species ; for it is said horses are in like manner sufferers, as well as sheep ; but this I will not give for a fact. The last time it made its appearance is yet fresh in the memory of every one ; it is but a few years ago ; at that time it spread in a short period over all Europe ; I am told it has at present reached the Continent ; and there is some reason to believe, from the experience we have



have in the disease, it will visit many parts before it ceases. \*

## S Y M P T O M S.

The first symptoms are, a great cough, with straitness about the breast, and considerable dyspnea. The patients generally complain, as if they had something like a ball in their throat, about the head of the sternum; to this they attribute the want of free perspiration; a coryza, or running at the nose, always takes place, thin and acrid, excoriating the upper lip, and vellicating the membrana sneideriana, rendering the inside of the nose extremely painful: this is always accompanied with a violent sneezing, which adds very much to the

\* Since this was wrote, there are accounts of its having made its appearance at Stockholm and other parts of the Continent, where it rages with violence.



pain of the head. In general, among my patients, I found a forenests over the eyes, chiefly about the brows, which they said was seated in the bone, and rendered them stiff and painful to be opened, nor when open could they bear a strong light.

The head is also in this complaint much affected, especially the fore part, in the course of the frontal sinuses. This pain is much aggravated by coughing; at the same time are felt universal pains over the whole body, such as we often meet with in continued fevers; there is generally a febricula, which is known by the alternate heat and cold the patients feel; and in some cases the pulse is evidently accelerated, and the fever running very high; but in the greater number of those that came under my care, this did not happen.

In



In many I could distinguish very little fever, by what remarks I was able to make on the pulse: in others, nevertheless, it was sufficiently evident; and many were weak and faint. There is always some thirst. In my own case, and in all those I visited, the pain on attempting to cough was felt about the head of the sternum, reaching as far down as its middle, but not spreading far on either side. I found very few who pointed at the seat of the pain as placed near the cartilago ensiformis. From this it appears to be entirely confined to the trachea, and its first ramifications; neither the pleura covering the lungs, nor their proper coat having any part in the affection.

In some who were valetudinarians, whose lungs were previously in an unsound state; or where there was a hereditary taint, laying an easy foundation for an affection, the case was otherwise. These were seized in a more



violent manner, and the complaint here put on a more dangerous appearance.

The pain in the breast is seldom felt but on attempting to cough. Then it resembles the pricking of a thousand pins, totally checking the effort.

The throat and mouth burns with heat, with an uncommon smarting pain over the fauces, and behind the velum pendulum palati. The tongue and fauces become dry, and considerably parched. In two patients this was remarkably the case. Some have bled at the nose; and one patient had abscesses formed in both ears, which burst and have continued discharging for some time past.

As the complaint abates the pain in the breast ceases; first gradually leaving the sternum and neighbouring parts, but continues  
fixed



fixed some time longer about its head, with a duller and less acute sensation on coughing, which very little now, if at all, impedes that effort of nature to free herself from something irritating.

In this stage expectoration becomes more easy, the cough less severe, *i. e.* less painful, as was already mentioned, but not less frequent; the fit not ceasing till a quantity of mucus be pumped up. Though a diarrhæa be not a characteristic symptom, nor frequently met with, yet I have seen some few cases where it was conjoined. In some of these, however, it existed before the influenza made its appearance.

The duration of this disease in general is not long. I have seen none very ill above a week: many not more than three or four days. Others, however, have been less mildly dealt with, and have laboured under



it for upwards of fourteen. It generally leaves the body weak and debile, and for a considerable time unfit for much exercise.

A gentleman who left London a few days ago, told me, as he passed through the streets pretty early in the morning, that he observed many of those who cry things for sale, to lean their heads against the walls of the houses, and cry their goods; not being able to support themselves upright.

The seat of the complaint seems, from the history we have given of its symptoms, to be entirely placed in the mucous membrane of the trachea, sneiderian membrane, and that lining the frontal sinuses. That there is an inflammation induced in these, must also be obvious.

#### DIAGNOSTIC.



## D I A G N O S T I C.

It is no difficult task to distinguish it from an inflammation of the lungs, and pleura. The state of the pulse, which in this complaint is for the most part soft and feeble, in the pleura generally full and hard, would of itself suffice for this purpose; but the coryza, which never takes place in the pleurisy, will be still a farther mark: nor are there found in pleurisy those wandering pains over the body, so universal in this disease. It has, indeed, a nearer resemblance and connection with the catarrh. In both we often meet with coryza, pains in the head, and over the body; but the sporadic nature of the one, appearing only in those persons who have been exposed in a particular manner to cold, and the epidemic nature of the other, attacking almost every one indiscriminately, without distinction of sex, age, or situation, will direct us  
in



in our diagnostic. Perhaps, we might add a previous constitution of the air, and state of the weather. A man who had a compound fracture of the thigh, and had been confined to bed by it for upwards of four weeks before the disease made its appearance, was seized with it, and suffered equally with the rest of the family. This is a strong proof of its epidemic nature.

### C U R E.

When the influenza is skilfully treated, it seldom proves fatal ‡: on the other hand, if unskilfully handled or entirely neglected, it may lay the foundation for consumptions. The inflammation may spread; may penetrate into the substance of the lungs, abscesses may be formed; the consequence of which must be absorption: The mass of

‡ I have heard only of one person who died of it, since its present commencement: he was previously in a bad state of health.



fluids in this manner will be contaminated, and the patient at length sink under a confirmed hectic.

With respect to the method to be pursued; in this part of the country venesection is unsafe, unless in plethoric and robust habits. It yields in most cases to the other modes of removing inflammation. We are to administer plenty of thin, diluting liquors, such as barley-water with a little nitre, or acidulated with orange or lemon juice: sage tea, ground-ivy tea, balm tea, orange whey, weak negus made with oranges or tamarinds, lemonade sweetened with honey. What ever one of these we chuse for drink, it should be used somewhat warm. The relaxing powers of such liquids are greater when subtepid than either altogether cold or when made pretty hot. It should be a constant rule to sip of these drinks every now and then, whether thirst requires it or not. Our  
drinks



drinks may be sweetened to our taste with honey, succ. glycerrh. or liquorice-root boiled in it.

Gentle diaphoretics ought not to be omitted to promote a free perspiration, on which a great part of the cure will depend. For this purpose sp. minderer. with a few drops of vin. antim. and a few of L. Laud. will answer. If our patients are not so bad as to be confined to bed, we should at least caution them to stay within doors; but it would be better still to advise them to keep in bed to encourage perspiration. The feet should be every night bathed in warm water. This will not only bring the determination of the blood from the bronchiæ, and of course relieve them, but a considerable absorption of the water will be made, and the blood even in this manner, if there be any degree of sîziness existing in it, diluted, and the cohesion of its gluten loosened.



ed. When the cough is distressing and keeps from rest, an opiate must be administered. I give them with great success: For admit there be present a considerable share of inflammation, yet the irritation occasioned by the cough more than over-balances the heating qualities of the opiate; nay, a night's rest from coughing, wonderfully promotes expectoration. It is needless to mention mucilages, after what was said above on drinks. Solutions of gum arabic will prove here very serviceable. Costiveness is to be obviated by some of the milder laxatives; perhaps cream of tartar made into an electuary with honey may supersede all others; for the simpler our prescriptions are so much the better. A multiplicity of medicines only breeds commotion and interrupts the action of one another. We may relieve the pain of the throat, by ordering the steams of warm water to be inhaled. This may be medicated with herbs as we



judge proper, though the warm water alone will answer nearly as well, if proper inhalers, such as described by Mr. Mudge, be not convenient, a tea-pot, wrapping the pipe round with a handkerchief or towel, forming a sort of tube, may answer as a substitute.

The food should be light; rice or bread pudding; thin broths, sago; to a pint of which, a glass of white wine may be added. Panado, to which likewise, if our patient be not very feverish, we may add a little wine.

If the appetite be not much impaired, which I have sometimes found the case, and the patient ardently wishes to indulge in some flesh meat, it should be boiled. Roast meat heats too much, as having its fat or gravy, in a great measure, retained in it by the constant rotation it undergoes in dressing.

As



As vegetables are laxative, and do not produce so much chyle as flesh meat to disturb the animal œconomy, we may allow our patients such of the olera as they chuse.

I seldom find it necessary either to bleed or blister\*; nor have I heard of any cases so treated in a circuit of between twenty and thirty miles round this place, save one Lady at Saint Alban's, where the Surgeon thought it necessary, and whose blood indeed was considerably inflamed, as appeared by the coagulable lymph separated on its surface. I have been informed, however, that in London they both bleed and blister with advantage. In some parts of the city, however, I am authorized to say, bleeding did not answer. Dr. Rogers, Physician to the Fins-

\* One Surgeon in this town tells me, he has applied blisters in a few cases where the difficulty of breathing was great, bending the body forward, and threatening (he said) suffocation.



bury Dispensary, Clerkenwell, whose opportunity of seeing the disease has been extensive both in his public Dispensary and private practice, informs me, that in place of finding it accompanied in general with much inflammation, it rather verges towards the typhus type. In one case this was remarkable; so that he was obliged to administer the bark in various forms. This patient was a Lady, and of a delicate habit.

My friend Dr, Willan likewise, Physician to another Dispensary in the city, saw a case where a few ounces only of blood was taken away; the consequence of which was a depression of spirits and lowness of pulse, where the beats could with difficulty be distinguished for three days after, notwithstanding endeavours to raise it.

Vomits too, in the beginning, have been said to have very good effects; but in this country



country I have not seen a single emetic ventured on; and have heard only of two or three instances of it. They create great irritability; for this reason I should be afraid to venture on them. It is true, they open the pores on the surface, and relieve obstructed perspiration; but this may be done with more safety without them.

With respect to bleeding; the nature of this place and season, sufficiently caution against it. The country is woody; the leaves of the trees now pretty fully opened; hence they retain a greater quantity of moisture, and from their shade impede the free circulation of the air; the rains for months past almost continual, and of course much stagnating water on the ground. A constant exhalation of vapour is daily more or less taking place; by this means the atmosphere is loaded with moisture: and as the summer



mer is now advancing, when the sun shines forth it is with vigour, which raises the moisture still more. This variableness of weather, often in the same day, is sufficient to relax the most robust fibre, and induce debility in the strongest habits.

That this is the case is evident, from the number of intermittent fevers round this neighbourhood. Of numbers that dwell along the banks of a small rivulet that waters this, and several other villages in the course of twelve or fourteen miles, fevers of this type are to be found at present almost in every family. I have seen children under them of six years of age, and one so young as two; nor is this, as I am informed, a rare occurrence. The typhus has likewise showed itself in several instances of late in this place; all these plainly point at debility; for these reasons I have not bled in a single case,



case, excepting in one, of the many I saw under the present epidemic; nor indeed does the state of the inflammation in the least warrant its propriety \*.

In our practice among the poor, who are deprived of those conveniences to be met with in genteeler life, we may fully answer our purposes by the Sp. Minder. & Vin. Antim. as mentioned already, giving plenty of milk posset, made either with buttermilk, or in its stead good vinegar.

Mucilaginous drinks may be made cheap, and good enough with Rad. Glycerrh. Spanish juice, decoctions of common mal-

\* Since this was wrote, a gentleman of this place tells me, he has bled in some few cases with advantage; yet I examined the blood of one who came to be bled, and it confirmed what I have advanced.—The patient had insisted on being bled.

lows,



lows, lintseed tea, decoction of furfur, made palatable with honey, or such like, the expence of which they may easily bear, fifteen grains of nitre may be added to any of these thrice a day.

Whether we practise among the poor or otherwise, strong sudorifics should be avoided. Hence Pulv. Dover. Camphor, and such like, are improper; these both heat and irritate too much. For the same reason we should avoid all the warm Alexipharmics. Some order to the poor treacle posset, made with treacle and ale, and oftentimes adding butter. This surely is an unwarrantable practice; it must throw the patient into a copious sweat, and from such relaxation of the perspirable pores, he is in ten times the greater danger of catching a fresh cold. Lubricating and softening linctuses, will avail much in taking off the tickling cough, and allowing the mucus to thicken,



thicken, these may be composed of Conserv. Cynosbat. ol. Amygdolar. Mucilage of Gum Arabic and Paregoric Elixir, or Syr. Papaveris. Some add to this a few drops of Elix. Vitrioli: but I would object to this, as tending, perhaps, to check perspiration.

A very useful and cheap Linctus may be composed of Mucilag: Sem. Lin. Syr. Moror. and a few drops of Sp. Nitr. Dulc.

Spermaceti mixtures likewise, if it is judged necessary, may be given; but the Linctus seems to answer better.

By such means as these we may reasonably hope to obviate all the bad effects of the Influenza, without the loss of blood in most instances, and restore our patients to their former health and vigour. Let us remember the proverb, *ne sanguinis humani prodigus*, at



least before we use the lancet, let us weigh well the symptom that seems to indicate it.

As the Author's intention in this little tract is rather to appear useful than elegant, he has therefore been at little pains with regard to diction or ornament. To write plain, so as to be rightly understood, is all he aims at. The humane reader will, he is persuaded, easily forgive errors of that nature, in a sketch wrote in haste, and intended for immediate use: and as he has consulted no author in drawing it up, nor opened a single book on the subject, his description is to be considered as solely made from his own observations, since the present commencement of the disease: for this reason he hopes he is not censurable, if all its variety of symptoms be not enumerated.

The young practitioner, who has not had an opportunity of seeing the disease before,

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as well as the patient, may perhaps reap some advantage from the short and imperfect account given of it here. And if this end is obtained, he shall be the less anxious on the present occasion respecting literary reputation.

*Luton, May 28, 1782.*

T H E E N D.



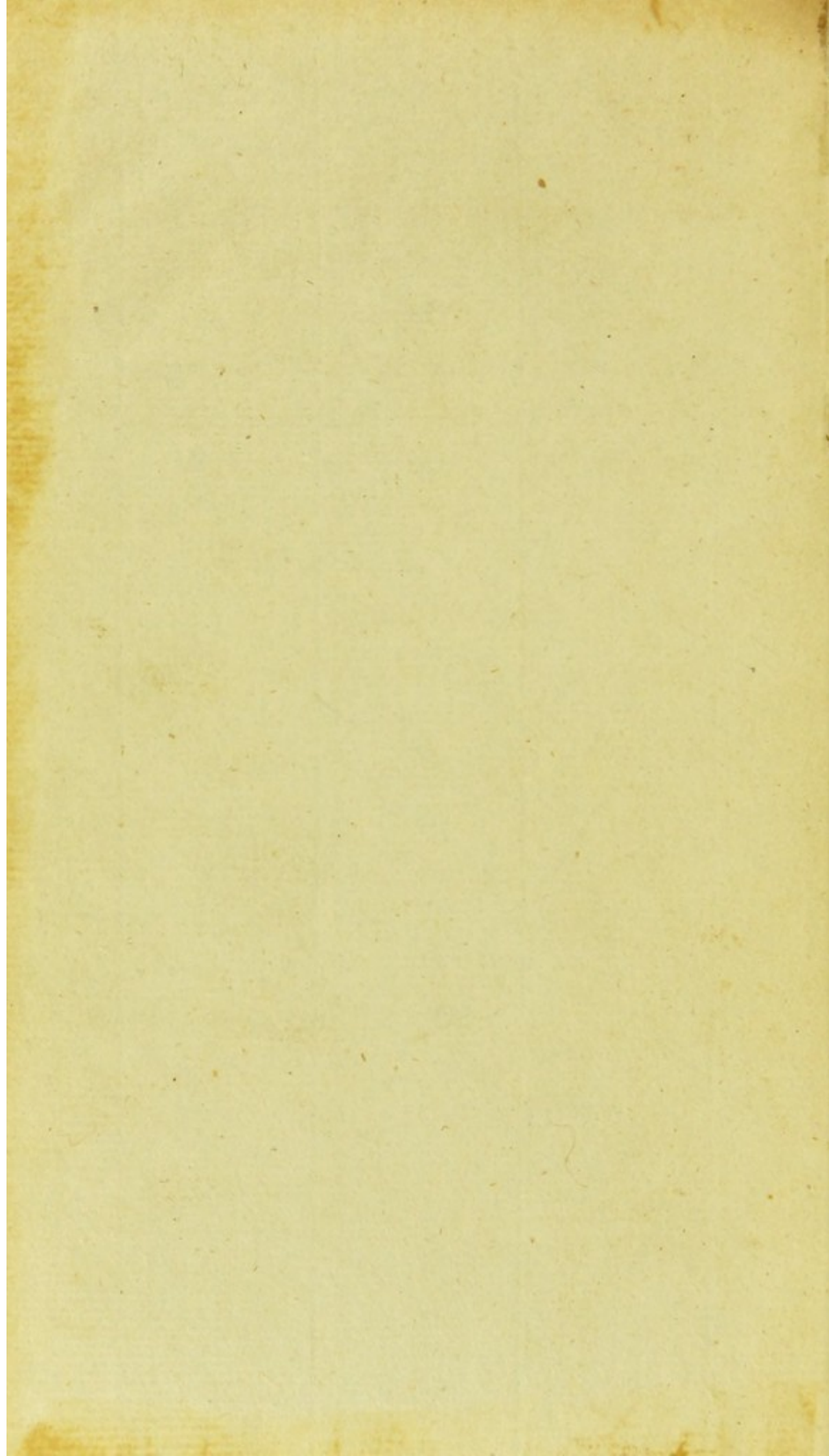
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Liverpool, May 28, 1782.

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