

**Three letters on medical subjects : addressed to the Reverend Gilbert Ford, Ormskirk, Lancashire. Containing I. An account of the effects of an aloetic medicine in the gout and other chronical complaints. II. A practice which has been successful in the individual prevention of the late epidemics. III. An account of the sedative properties of the granulated preparation of tin, in some affections of the mind / by John Ford.**

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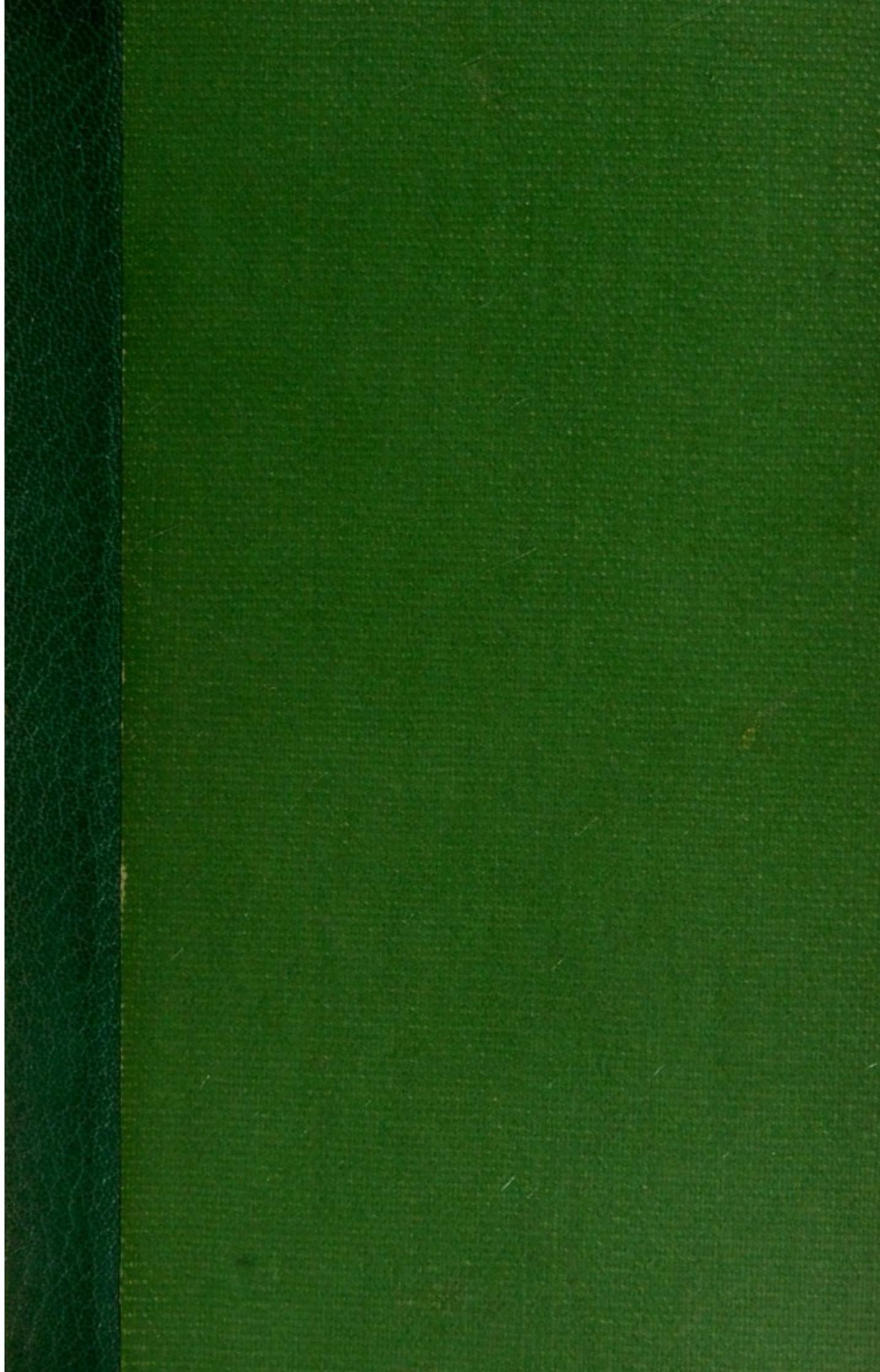
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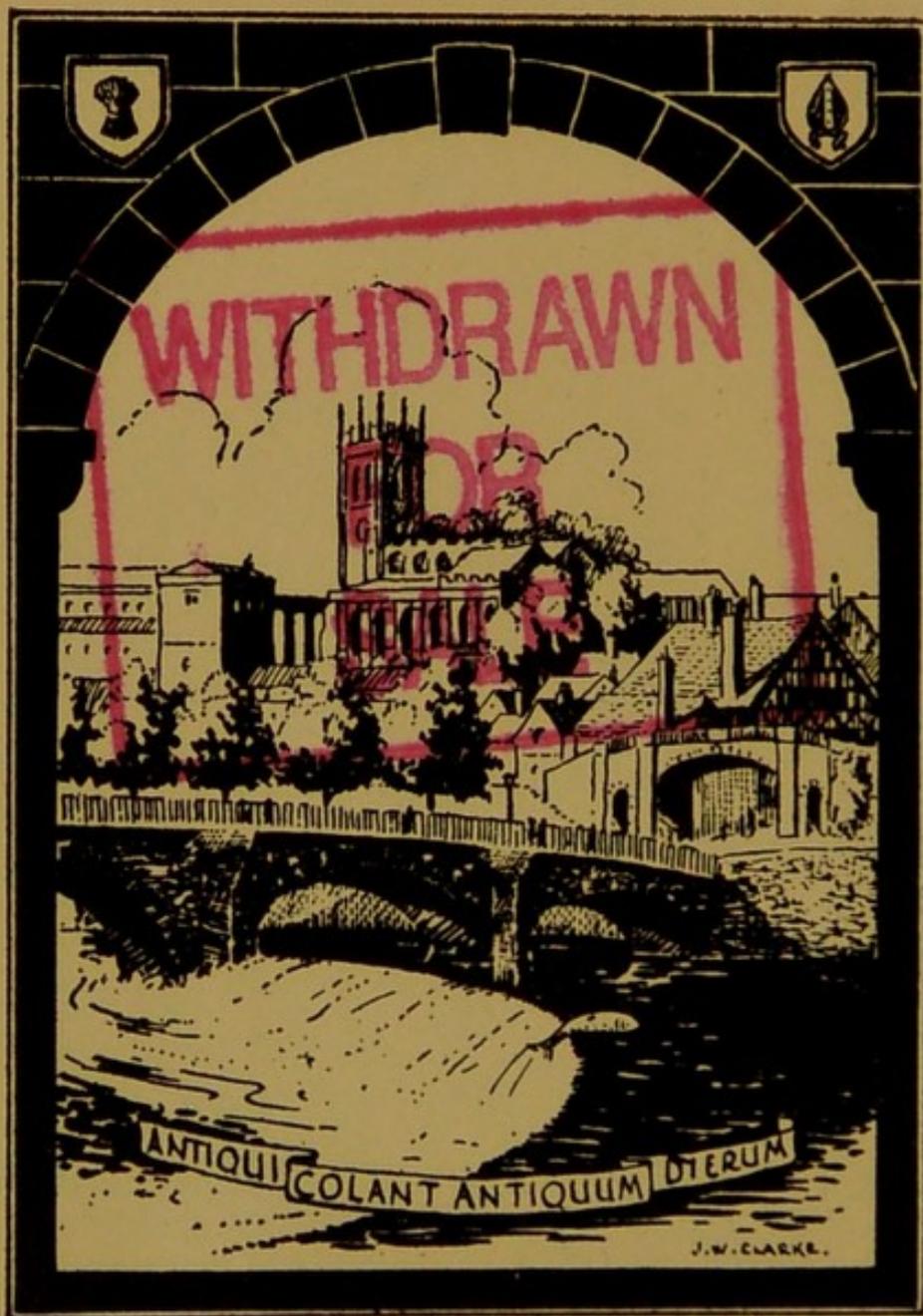
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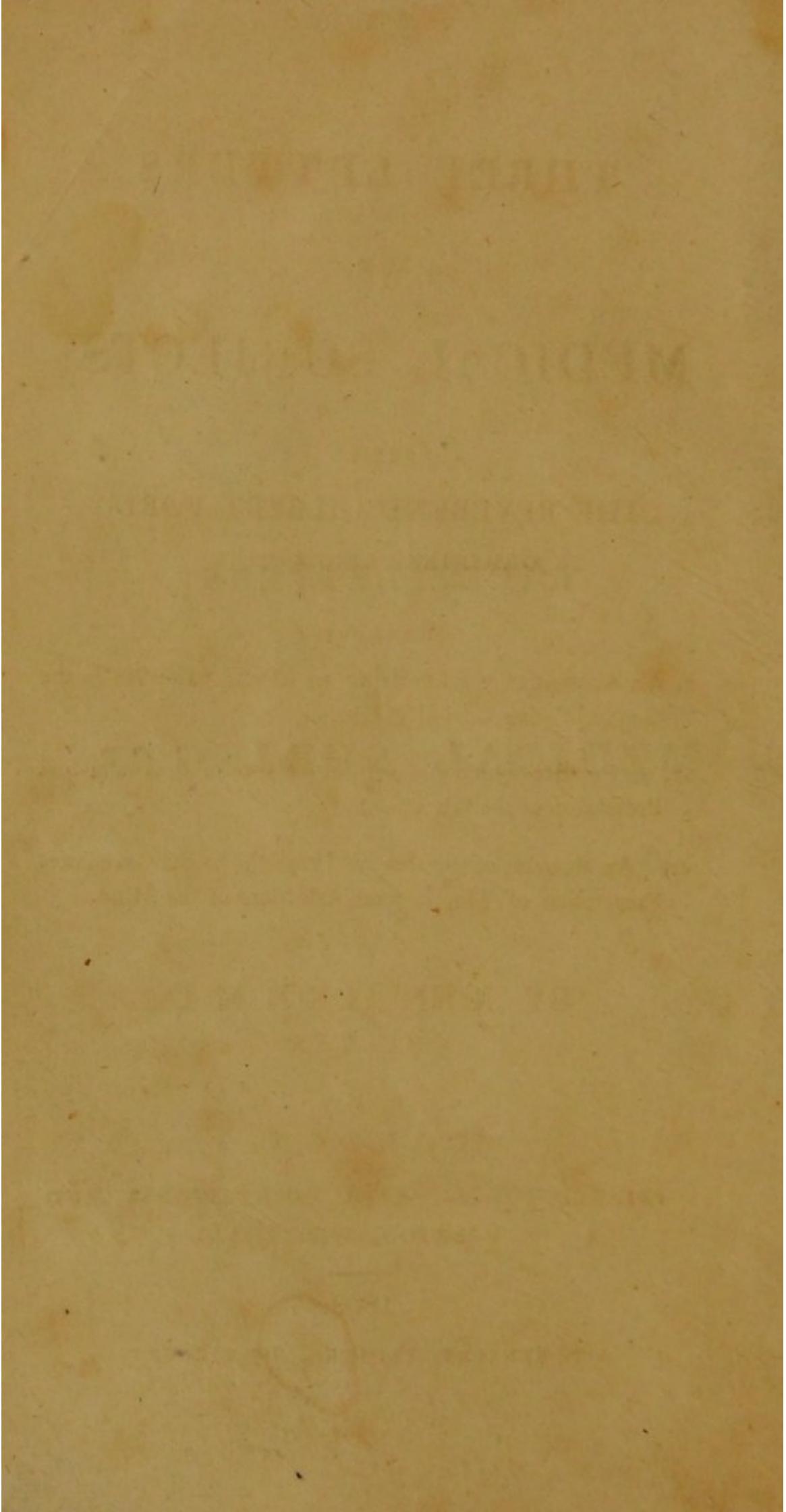




THREE LETTERS

ON

MEDICAL SUBJECTS.



✓ THREE LETTERS  
ON  
MEDICAL SUBJECTS:

ADDRESSED TO  
THE REVEREND GILBERT FORD,  
ORMSKIRK, LANCASHIRE.

CONTAINING

- I. An Account of the Effects of an Aloetic Medicine in the Gout and other Chronical Complaints.
- II. A Practice which has been successful in the individual Prevention of the late Epidemics.
- III. An Account of the sedative Properties of the Granulated Preparation of Tin, in some Affections of the Mind.

BY JOHN FORD, M. D.  
CHESTER

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR J. WHITE, FLEET STREET, AND  
T. EGERTON, WHITEHALL.

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TO THE  
HON. CHARLES GREY, M. P.

DEAR SIR,

IT is not usual to prefix a dedication to so small a publication as the present ; but as it affords me the only opportunity I shall probably ever have, of publickly acknowledging my obligations to you, and your family, particularly to your very worthy uncle, Sir Henry Grey, I will own, I have felt no disposition to resist it. Were any other apology necessary, in an address to you I could easily find it in those talents, that integrity, and disinterestedness, which, in a certain rank of life, are at this time so peculiarly necessary to our country ; but I would rather seek it, as more appropriate to the present occasion, in that

humanity, which forms a distinguished part of your character.

The gout, and a disordered intellect in its various shades, are amongst the greatest calamities to which human nature is liable, and every attempt to cure or mitigate them, must therefore always be received with candor, and interest the feeling mind. These subjects form a considerable part of the following letters; and the observations they contain have been for the most part the result of accident, and not of any *a priori* reasoning. And, indeed, who could in the gout have expected from an aloetic medicine such effects as have been experienced from it? or, in the preparation of tin, to have found so powerful a sedative in some affections of the mind? These remedies were given with other views, and therefore the unexpected observations which have been the consequence, must be con-

sidered as merely the children of accident. As such, I beg leave to introduce them to you, and to solicit for them, from your humanity, that protection which they cannot claim as the offspring of science. With every wish for your own, and your family's welfare and happiness, I have the honor to be, with great respect,

Dear Sir,

Your much obliged

and most obedient servant,

JOHN FORD.



TO  
THE REVEREND GILBERT FORD,  
*Ormskirk, Lancashire.*

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DEAR SIR,

IT is now more than thirty years since the Honourable and Reverend Doctor TALBOT was at Bristol, with an infant daughter, who had an enlarged and indurated spleen, the edge and extent of which below the ribs could easily be traced by the finger. In the catalogue of symptoms attendant on this complaint was an obstinate costiveness, which was uniformly relieved by no medicine excepting a preparation the composition of which was a secret, but in which aloes was evidently

a predominating ingredient: but no aloetic which had been prescribed, produced the same effect. This circumstance did not escape my memory; and many years afterwards a receipt fell into my hands of a pill, consisting of aloes and some other ingredients, which was recommended as very effectual in cases of habitual and obstinate costiveness, and reported to succeed after the failure of other remedies apparently more powerful. Miss Talbot's case instantly occurred to my mind, and as well as I could recollect, the medicine appeared to be very similar to that, the powers of which had at so distant a period attracted my attention. The event gave probability to my suspicion of the identity of the preparations, at least as far as a similarity of effect could justify the conclusion. I have now for many years recommended it with an almost invariable effect; and a pill of a grain, a grain and an half, or two grains in weight, which are

the quantities I usually prescribe, is generally in operation equal to more than double the quantity of aloes administered in the usual manner, without producing irritation, (or at least any which deserves the name) and, excepting when it had unadvisedly been taken in an excessive dose, without that painful consequence, (the piles) which so frequently follows the use of aloetics.

Such is the history of this medicine, in the discovery of which I claim no merit; a solitary melancholy instance having first led me to the knowledge of its powers, and an accident to the mode of preparing it. The chief difficulties which occurred in the preparation were, in the refinement of the aloes, and in procuring such an union of it with the other ingredients, as might prevent its separation from them in its passage through the stomach and intestines,

whilst the solubility of the compound was sufficiently insured. But these, if I am not mistaken, have been surmounted, and the composition is now as complete as can be wished. It may not be amiss here to observe, that whenever resinous substances are prescribed, the greatest care should be taken to render them soluble in the stomach and intestines. The virtues even of bark are improved by an attention to this circumstance, and from a neglect of it a very singular case fell many years since under my notice at Bristol; which, not to interrupt the principal subject of my letter, I will subjoin in a note\*. If it be

\* Mr. Samuel P—l, an eminent merchant at Bristol, had for a long time been afflicted with an ulcer in one of the intestines (the rectum), which communicated with the bladder, a circumstance evinced by appearances in the urine which could not be controverted. He had been under the care of Dr. Bonython, an eminent physician at that time in Bristol, who prescribed for him pills composed of calomel

asked, why I do not publish the receipt of a medicine which promises to be so useful to the public; my answer is, that I have reasons which it is neither incumbent on me to bring forward, nor necessary to trouble the world with. The consequence of this declaration is obvious; but what a man does not fear, he will not deprecate. Whatever censure I may

and a resinous substance, which appeared to agree very well with him. During the time he was in the course of taking them, he was seized with a total suppression of urine, and, in the absence of his physician, I was desired to see him. It was natural to suppose that the suppression proceeded from a spasm on the neck of the bladder, owing to the morbid state of the contiguous parts. But the event proved that I was mistaken; for whilst the medicine which under this idea had been prescribed, was preparing, he was taken with a violent disposition to empty his bladder, and in the effort discharged with his urine a solid substance, which, upon examination, proved to be one of the pills that had passed in an undissolved state through the ulcer of communication above mentioned, from the rectum into the bladder, and from thence into the urinary canal.

incur on this occasion, it is sufficient to say, that I have not been solicitous to derive from the medicine that emolument to which my friends think me entitled, and that a considerable distribution of it has been gratuitous, without any other advantage than what has arisen from the consciousness of having given relief to many with whom more active medicines had failed. The cases in which it has been principally serviceable are, such as are generally and indiscriminately denominated bilious, but which are frequently owing not to a redundancy but to a deficiency, or inert action of bile; in indurated accumulations of the intestines; habitual costiveness; in indigestion from a sedentary life, habits of intemperance, or a gouty cause; and in a few instances of confirmed and chronical jaundice. Some persons who have been subject to frequent fits of the gout, by taking the pill as an alterative, have been either kept free

from gouty visits, or these have been milder, or shorter in duration. It has the advantage of most medicines of this class, that its use is not attended by subsequent costiveness, nor in gouty habits are any bad consequences to be apprehended from the use of a medicine which acts upon the principle this does; a principle not confined to its effect upon the bowels, but extended to the prevention of those visceral obstructions, particularly of the liver, to which gouty persons are so liable, and which frequently are so fatal to them. With this view many of my friends take it as an alterative; and I will use the expression of one of your acquaintance, who says, that he occasionally has recourse to it, not because he feels that he wants it, but in order that he may not want it. I have now complied with your request, that I would commit to paper some account of a medicine, which, from the partiality naturally attached to the

relationship subsisting between us, has been more highly appreciated by you than I fear it deserves; and am,

Dear Sir,

Yours very affectionately,

JOHN FORD.



POSTSCRIPT.

IT is very well known to the medical practitioner, that, after the use of common opening medicines, indurated contents of the intestines will frequently remain undisposed of. The use of the aloetic medicine is rarely attended with this inconvenience, but sometimes it will happen; and in this case a dose of granulated tin powder from one to three drachms, taken for three nights successively

before the aloetic, will generally remove this frequent but unsuspected source of disease, appearing under a variety of forms. Calomel has in this state of the bowels been given with success; but when milder remedies will produce the same effect, these, unless in cases of great urgency, should surely be preferred. Tin powder (the granulated I mean) has powers scarcely suspected, which will be the subject of another letter.

## LETTER SECOND.

DEAR SIR,

SOME months ago I addressed a letter to you on the effect of an aloetic medicine in costiveness, and other affections of the primæ viæ, in the gout, and various chro- nical complaints; and have now the satisfac- tion of informing you, that what was advanced in it, has been abundantly confirmed by ac- counts transmitted to me, as well as by ob- servations which have since that time passed under my own eye. Give me leave also to add, that whatever may have been my grati- fication on the occasion, my surprise has been not less; unable as I am to reconcile such an effect on the human constitution, with the apparently slender pretensions of the remedy. At the same time I could not but be aware,

how liable the judgment is to be imposed upon by what may affect so complicated a machine as the animal frame, how difficult it is to trace up changes brought about in it to their true causes, and to establish a practical fact, which may meet with the entire concurrence of the mind. Every physician must have experienced this. When therefore the first cases occurred of gouty paroxysms having been prevented or mitigated by the aloetic medicine, I shall be excused, I hope, when I confess that I was not very attentive to them. But after repeated confirmations of its good effects, I should have been culpable, if I had continued to disregard them. This has not been the case. They have for some time past agreeably employed a considerable portion of my leisure hours, and it will not I trust be too much to say, the consequence has been, that every doubt I had entertained on the subject has been removed. And should such a de-

claration be thought premature, I will beg leave to say, that the instances of the efficacy of the medicine have been I think sufficiently numerous to justify it, and to induce me to consider this second address to you, as a duty I owe to society, under the impression that it may be the means of affording some comfort to a considerable proportion of its individuals: and I do it the more readily, conscious that there has been no bias on my judgment to support any particular theory, nor prepossession in favour of the remedy, for such a disposition is not always favourable to truth. It was at first given for other purposes than as a cure or palliative of the gout; and to repeat what has ~~been~~ before been said, the event was as unexpected to me, as it has been agreeable. I had long before been persuaded of its general utility in various affections of the primæ viæ, the seat of many diseases, and where probably a number of chronical complaints, al-

though not classed amongst those of the stomach and intestines, are in the first instance, in their origin I mean, manufactured. Flattered by this unexpected success, you will not wonder if I have been solicitous, that the medicine should be given with every advantage that could be derived from it, as well in the selection of the ingredients which compose it, as in the subsequent process of combining them, in order that its merits and demerits should be adjudged by its genuine effects only. In this point I shall be secure, as long as it is prepared under my own eye, which has hitherto been the case; whatever may be its future fate. You are acquainted with the reasons which induce me *for the present* to withhold the publication of the receipt; but, in order to satisfy those who, on account of the advanced period of my life, have been pleased to express their apprehensions of losing the benefit of the remedy, I

have not only acquainted you with the particular ingredients of the composition, but you have been a witness to the several steps of the preparation. But the question will recur, how does the medicine operate to produce such effects on the constitution? The answer is not easy. But it should seem, that, independent of its action on the first passages, much is to be attributed to its promoting the functions of the liver, which are so liable to be disturbed in the gout. That this should be the case we shall not wonder, when we consider that the circulation is carried on in the liver in a manner different from the circulation in the other glands of the body. In these, the blood which is conveyed to them, for the purpose of secretion, is through arteries, but in the liver it is through a vein, called the vena portarum. For this deviation of nature from her usual mode in the animal œconomy, many reasons are assigned by physiologists, which it is

not necessary to bring forward. It is sufficient for the purpose of this letter to observe, that, in consequence of this deviation, the blood distributed in the liver for the secretion of the bile, being remote from the energy of the heart in carrying on the circulation, obstructions are very liable to be formed in this part, when any cause operates in the system which has a tendency to promote them, or when from any cause the heart has been deprived of the agency of its great auxiliary in maintaining the circulation. You will conclude that I mean exercise. I do; and this is one of the non-naturals so necessary to health, that a continued disuse of it must lay the foundation of many chronical diseases, and of some acute, and for the reason already assigned, more particularly occasion affections of the liver. A sedentary and studious course of life, too often affords melancholy proofs of the truth of this observation, and to obviate

its ill effects, the pills have been found to be eminently useful. From the peculiar quality of the medicine to promote the biliary secretion, its use in the gout, and the indigestion, flatulencies, and other affections of the first passages, to which the gouty habit is so obnoxious, I have been led to believe that there may be a greater connexion between the gout and the functions of the liver than is generally imagined; but whether I am right or not, I will not contend, satisfied, if experience should establish its efficacy in this dreadful disease; a point of greater consequence than all the theories in the world. I find, however, that I am not singular in my conjecture, for, on mentioning it to a very valuable medical friend\*, he told me that it was also the opinion of the late Dr. Darwin, that the gout originated in

\* Dr. Rutter of Liverpool, not less respectable for his medical knowledge, than for his humanity and attention in the exercise of his profession.

the liver, and immediately pointed it out to me in the *Zoonomia*.

This hypothetical coincidence, for I will give it no other epithet, on the subject, was quite new to me, and I will add very gratifying: for whatever judgment may be pronounced on some parts of the Doctor's writings, his authority on medical subjects must be acknowledged to be always respectable. I have somewhere in this letter advanced, that after having attentively considered the operation of the aloetic, in the many cases that had fallen under my observation, no doubt had remained in my mind of its efficacy. This may require some explanation, as it may be understood to a greater extent than it was intended it should be. I meant only that I had every reason to attribute the good effect of the medicine, to the medicine itself, and not to any concurrent cause: and

I know but one exception to this conclusion. It is in the case of Mr. Prothero, an eminent attorney at Usk in Monmouthshire, whom I saw about four years ago, in one of the most dreadful paroxysms of the gout I had ever before witnessed. He was in the prime of life, and after the fit had left him, began the use of the medicine, since which he has been free from the gout. But it is fair to say, that about the same time he commenced a plan of abstinence from the use of fermented liquors, and to this deviation from his accustomed mode of living, his subsequent freedom from gout may in part be fairly imputed. But in the other instances, no such alteration having taken place, this single one cannot I apprehend be any objection to my opinion. Gouty affections will undoubtedly occur beyond the salutary operation of the medicine, and persons long accustomed to regular fits of the disease, may be under the necessity perhaps

of submitting at certain periods to a recurrence of them. The constitution may contract a debt which *must* be discharged. But even in this situation, it must be granted, that a medicine which tends to keep the body open, to strengthen the digestive powers, to produce a well formed chyle, and to maintain the functions of the liver, may be taken with advantage: to pursue the metaphor just used, it may lessen the amount of the debt, although it should not absolutely cancel it. Nor are we to be surprised, if under the most unpromising situations of the human frame, these essential points of general health being attended to, the powers of nature should in a variety of complaints prove superior to her difficulties, and obtain a certain degree of victory. *Omnis natura*, says Cicero, *vult esse sui conservatrix*. I cherish the flattering idea that this may be the case in some melancholy cases of gout, and a few instances which I

have seen, encourage me in the hope. But I shall for the present wave this subject, and solicit your attention to another, which, if I am not mistaken, you will judge to be equally interesting. After the many unreserved conversations, which have passed between us on medical subjects, I need not inform you that I have long been of opinion, the first attack of contagion on the human body is made in the primæ viæ, that the matter of contagion, whatever that may be, gets entangled in the saliva, and mucous secretions of the mouth and throat, and from thence passes into the stomach. If this be true, the practical inference is obvious. But should the hypothesis be controverted, I shall not contend for it. I have lived long enough to witness the rise and fall of a variety of medical theories, but whilst time has laid these in their graves, I have seen with satisfaction that it has confirmed the judgments of nature. The works

of Hippocrates and of Sydenham are read with pleasure, not to say with admiration, even in the present enlightened period of medicine: so true is the observation of Cicero, *Opinionum commenta delet dies, naturæ judicia confirmat.*

My idea, that contagion was received first into the primæ viæ, was derived from the medical reports, published six years ago, by Dr. Currie of Liverpool, and I recommend the work to you. It is replete with science and practical knowledge, and highly as it has been appreciated by the public, it has not been beyond its merits. In it, there are some observations adverse to the received opinion of cutaneous absorption, and in consequence, I was led to consider how infection was probably introduced into the system. About that time Doctor Gardner's treatise on the Animal Œconomy was put into my hands, by

Doctor Rutter, and his arguments in favor of its reception into the primæ viæ, carried, I thought, great weight with them. Doctor Mitchell, professor of chemistry at New York, has lately favoured the world with some very excellent publications, which seem to support this supposition, whatever may be the fate of his theory of the generation of a septic gas in the intestines highly destructive of animal life. He calls it the gaseous oxyd of septon or azote. It seems however very certain, that in some epidemics and putrid diseases, processes are carrying on in the intestines, which tend to palsy the powers of the system, induce great apparent debility, and which are inimical to the animal œconomy\*. I have

\* Doctor Mitchell says, It must have occurred to every physician in his observations on putrid complaints, that the diseased state of the alimentary canal is one of the first group of symptoms that attract his notice; and also, that it is of the most troublesome and dangerous nature.

said apparent debility (symptomatic might perhaps have been a better term) to distinguish it from real. This distinction is of the utmost importance in practice; and to make it, requires the exercise of the most discriminating judgment of the physician. On his decision the fate of his patient must often depend, for the line of his practice will be directed by it. In a conversation I once had with the late Dr. Warren, he told me, that to decide between real and apparent debility, was sometimes one of the most embarrassing situations in which a physician could be placed. I cannot cite greater medical authority, and what appeared a matter of such difficulty to this great physician, is still, I fear, in the same state, for I know of no discoveries in medicine since his death, that can have lessened the perplexity in which the medical practitioner must from this cause find himself occasionally involved. After all, the theory

of contagion is likely to remain obscure; but, impressed with the idea that it is introduced into the system by the alimentary canal, during the prevalence of the scarlet fever, and malignant sore throat at Liverpool, and other places during the two last years, I recommended several persons who were particularly exposed to the infection, to take every night one of the pills mentioned so often in this letter, and had the satisfaction to find that they all escaped the infection. I know not, that the pills had on this occasion any efficacy preferable to what might have been expected from any other aperient that would have operated with certainty and regularity, and not have passed too quickly through the intestines. It should seem, that they only disposed of what, if retained, might have been the source of disease. I will also add, that on the first attack of the disorder, an opening medicine was of great service. It either prevented its

progress, or mitigated its symptoms, and shortened its duration. The epidemical catarth of the present season (March 1803) has been in general greatly softened by the early administration of remedies acting on the first passages; and whole families have been secured against its attack by an aloetic pill taken every night by the individuals. These facts certainly give support to the opinion, that in these diseases the infection was received into the stomach and intestines, and operated there as the foundation of future disease. A smart dose of mercurial physic taken as soon as possible after the attack, has been of infinite service, and, as you have in many instances experienced in your own, and the neighbouring parish, made all other medicines unnecessary. In confirmation of what has been said, I shall beg leave to cite a passage from the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, which occurs in the article *Plague*. The Mahome-

tans believe the plague to be a punishment from God inflicted on men for their sins: they therefore take no precaution to guard themselves against it. The wiser professors of this religion, however, at present act otherwise; for we find a remedy recommended by *Sidy Mohammed Zerroke*, one of the most celebrated *Marabouts*, prefixed with these remarkable words. “The lives of us all are in  
 “the hands of God, when it is, we must die.  
 “However, it hath pleased him to save many  
 “persons from the plague, by their taking  
 “every morning while the infection rages,  
 “one pill or two of the following composition; viz. of myrrh two parts, saffron one  
 “part, of aloes two parts, of syrup of myrtle-  
 “berries a sufficient quantity.” These pills are in no respect different from those, which, under the name of *Rufus’s* pills, are to be met with in every apothecary’s shop. They

are rather to be ascribed to *Rhasis* or *Avicenna*, as I learn from an old dispensatory of *Valerius Cordus*, edited by the medical college of Nuremberg 1612. To the prescription for the pills are subjoined these words: “*Utiles sunt adversus pestiferæ luis contagia populariter grassantia.*” They are useful against the contagion of the plague when it is epidemical. This passage in the *Encyclopædia* did not occur to me, until I had formed my opinion on the subject, and I will own, I felt myself gratified in the concurrence of the *Marabout's* successful practice in the plague, with what I had before recommended for the same preventive purpose, in the epidemical malignant scarlet fever; in a disease which, although inferior in malignity, ranges under the same class with the plague. But I will now no longer trespass on your time. It was my intention to have added some obser-

uations on the medical properties of the granulated preparation of tin; but these must be postponed to another opportunity. I am,

Dear Sir,

Yours very affectionately,

J. F.

## LETTER THIRD.

DEAR SIR,

I NOW fulfil the promise I made you some time since, and send you the observations I have made on the use of tin powder, which I call the granulated to distinguish it from two other articles which are to be met with in the shops, the one a calx, the other, filings of this metal. It had been long a family medicine for the worms, but if I mistake not, Doctor Alston's publication in the Edinburgh medical essays, first brought it into regular practice. The physicians of the Bristol Infirmary, more than half a century ago, prescribed it in worm cases with great success. From them I first became acquainted with it, and have ever since successfully used it, with

out a single instance in which I had reason to regret the practice. I mention this, because many persons, from an association of ideas natural enough, have expressed their fears, lest the internal coat of the stomach and intestines should be injured by it. I have never seen the least reason for such apprehensions, and the length of time I have prescribed it, makes me, I flatter myself, no incompetent judge. The microscopical examination also of the granules of this metal, shews that they have no spicula or pointed angles; that they are rounded, and apparently harmless, and incapable of doing mischief by any momentum they can receive in the system. But experience, which is the best test, is completely in favour of its innocence. What I have generally made use of, has been prepared by Mr. Bush, Pewterer in Bristol. It is clean, and free from the least degree of calcination, and when passed over a sheet of writing paper, leaves not a vestige

behind it. When taken for the tape worm, it must be in large quantities; and in this obstinate case, it will often succeed after the failure of every other remedy. It should be given in a vehicle capable of suspending it, as treacle or jam of any kind. That it has no specific property to destroy worms, is I believe generally acknowledged. Its action seems to be purely mechanical, removing, by means of the peristaltic motion of the intestines, the worms from the lodgment they had formed in the folds of the intestines, wherein they were secure, and protected from the operation of other medicines. It is generally taken for three nights successively; and the morning after the last dose, some purging medicine is necessary. A powder consisting of equal quantities of alcalised mercury and jalap, is as good as any, and as the mercury will co-operate in intention with the tin, is to be preferred perhaps to other preparations wherein it is not

an ingredient. The alcalised mercury was a favourite medicine with my late very much lamented friend, Mr. Joseph Shapland of Bristol, and he gave it in many cases; but the division of the quicksilver by the testaceous powder, is so very tedious, that I fear the medicine is not often to be met with properly prepared, with its due proportion of mercury. Mr. Shapland was accustomed to put an equal quantity of quicksilver, and powder of chalk, into a bottle which was well corked and sealed, that none of the mercury might escape by the subsequent agitation of the bottle, which was continued until the division of the mercury was sufficiently accomplished. By this method he was sure that no part of the mercury was lost; but the process required a considerable length of time, and after all the labour, the division of the metal was not so complete as could be wished. An active mercurial powder procured without chemical com-

bination has been wished for, and such a one, in an improved and easy way of preparing an alcalised mercury, I will submit to the public at the conclusion of this letter. But to return to the subject of the granulated powder of tin. I have often given it in cases supposed to originate from worms, in which it was of great service, although no worms were discharged. Nor will this appear surprising; for a medicine, capable of discharging worms from their fastnesses in the folds of the intestines, must be very useful in its operation on a variety of sources of mischief, seated and lurking in them. Viscid phlegm it acts upon, mechanically I mean; and I have known many who have greatly suffered from pains and spasms of the stomach, arising probably from this cause, cured by it. It will also very often supersede the necessity of emetics, and has in many cases the advantage of them, as its operation extends to such parts of the

alimentary canal as are not immediately acted upon by emetics. Whoever reads the history of the Norfolk boy, who was cured of violent epileptic fits, and of apparently a confirmed idiocy, by accidentally taking a quantity of white paint, will need no other proof of the sympathetic connexion between the primæ viæ and the finer mechanism of the system, which so much influences the intellectual part. The case suggests also another observation, and a very important one it is, viz. the possibility of the strong hold worms, and other morbid matter, may take in the intestines, and subsist there for years, as the source of chronic disease. No physician will, I presume, feel himself bold enough, in the language of the elegant Roman classic, *tam periculosam facere medicinam*; or authorised by this single fact, literally to recommend the remedy which so happily fell in the way of Joseph Postle: but this astonishing case will

put him necessarily upon thinking, and as far as prudence will suffer him, perhaps influence his practice. The history of this boy was read before the royal society in the year 1758, by the Reverend Richard Oram, Chaplain to the Bishop of Ely, who was an eyewitness of the fact, and it was published in the second part of the 50th volume of the royal transactions ; but, immersed in that body of literature, it has, I fear, remained not much noticed, although one of the most memorable perhaps in the annals of medicine. I shall therefore make no apology for reprinting it at the end of this letter. In some parts of this narrative, the reader must shudder at such a dreadful situation of a fellow-creature, and, in every part, his feelings will be painfully excited, excepting in the event, when they will be amply consoled. This case occurred to me when my mind was attentive to the properties of granulated tin, and its effect in freeing the

intestines of accumulated impurities, and it could not have occurred more seasonably. The obvious observation on it was, that possibly by the tin powder the same effect might be gradually and safely brought about, as was produced so suddenly and violently in Joseph Postle; and that in many affections of the mind, even rising to madness, it might possibly be of use. I wish I could say I were justified by a sufficient number of cases in a sanguine recommendation of this remedy in these dreadful situations of the human body: but I have certainly seen enough to solicit the attention of the faculty to it. In cases of *Melancholy* I have often known it of service, by dislodging from the bowels contents indurated to a degree scarcely credible. The almost instantaneous relief that has sometimes followed the evacuation of these hardened concretions has pleasingly astonished me, and evidently pointed out the connexion be-

tween the state of the primæ viæ and the rational principle. In epilepsy the tin preparation has been given with great advantage; and in one instance of apparently impending madness, I have seen the paroxysm put off by it: and what is more gratifying, the lady who before had several times been under the necessity of undergoing coercive measures, remained, by the occasional use of the tin medicine, eight years free from any attack, and in this interval had married and borne two children. How she has been lately I know not, and it is six years since I have received any account of the state of her health. It is necessary to observe, that, after the first doses of the tin, and the subsequent aperient medicine, a large quantity of bile was parted with, and to this I attribute the relief my patient experienced.

The consideration of the advantages from the use of the granulated preparation of tin has been hitherto confined to its removal of impurities, or congestions in the first passages. I shall now solicit your attention to a singular property it has accidentally been discovered to possess: I mean a sedative power, specifically such, independent of what might be expected from that operation on the primæ viæ, which has already been taken notice of. By ascribing to it a sedative property, I do not mean to say that it can remove pain, but only, that in many cases I have known it to sooth and calm the perturbations of the human mind, which are so distressing to the unhappy sufferer, and frequently baffle the powers of medicine. In my present address to you, I have somewhere observed, that I had found the tin useful in lodgments of the viscid phlegm in the stomach; and, fourteen years ago, I had a patient at Bristol, Lady H.

to whom, on account of a spitting of blood she was at that time liable to, I was fearful of giving an emetic, for an affection of the stomach apparently from this cause. Sixty grains of the granulated preparation were prescribed to be taken at bed-time in a little jam, or jelly, and a few doses removed the complaint. But what was remarkable, her Ladyship, after the first dose, slept unusually well; and the subsequent doses had the same quieting effect, without leaving any of the unpleasant sensations which very often succeed the use of opiates. Since that time, I have had many opportunities of observing the same effect from the use of this remedy, and am therefore convinced that what I had at first seen in Lady H. was not accidental. To enumerate these would be unnecessary, but one occurred which I will not suppress. The Hon. Mrs. B— in the eighth month of pregnancy with her ninth child, was affected with such

foreboding horrors of her situation, that, after the ineffectual trial of various nervous remedies, she had recourse to tincture of opium, and had increased the dose from twenty to an hundred drops. But the powerful agency of this medicine was temporary only; her distress, after its effect was over, recurred with increased violence. In this state I saw her, and recommended a reduction of the opiate to twenty drops, and a quarter of an ounce of the tin medicine to be taken at bed time: when I visited her the next day, I received a very pleasing account of the effect of the medicine, but I cannot express it better than in her own words; which were, “ I am obliged  
“ to the medicine for a quieter night than I  
“ have experienced for some time, and I hope  
“ you have a *mine* of the powder.” It is, I believe, out of the power of language to express in stronger terms the feelings of this Lady, and her conviction of the benefit she

had received from the preparation. She afterwards, by degrees, entirely left <sup>of</sup> her laudanum, took occasionally a dose of tin powder, and by keeping her bowels in a proper state, underwent her confinement without a return of her apprehensions, or any other occasion of alarm. In some instances, the sedative operation of the tin has been so great, that I have had a difficulty in persuading my patients, that it could be brought about by any other medicine than by opium; and in one Lady, with whom a prejudice against this drug operated very powerfully, I was obliged to have recourse to the concurrent testimony of her apothecary, to obtain an acquiescence in my assurances. Under such a disposition of mind, a distrust of medical veracity, or rather an apprehension of deception, is always excusable. The period of pregnancy is an important one in the female life, and some of the inconveniencies attached to it are undoubt-

edly owing to the immense size, an organ, naturally small, attains at that time. This cannot happen without displacing other parts out of their natural situation, and bringing a degree of pressure upon them, and other contiguous parts, that must considerably affect the animal œconomy. The alimentary canal is greatly in the way of meeting this weight and pressure; and its contents must suffer that *remora* or detention, which is not only a present inconvenience, but renders the habit obnoxious to future inconveniencies more serious. A pregnant Lady should never undergo her confinement with loaded bowels; and a false delicacy in this respect may be the foundation of much subsequent alarm. I think it would not be going too far to suggest, that to this cause may often be referred those mental affections which sometimes precede, but more frequently follow, delivery. In this suggestion, too great a partiality to a fa-

yourite mode of investigating the causes of diseases may perhaps appear; but of this favourite, if it be one, I can say with truth, my only wish is, that, *valeat quantum valere potest*. The use of the tin powder (I always mean the granulated), in the last month of pregnancy, with occasionally a gentle aperient, has been attended with the most beneficial effects; and many persons, who had in their previous confinements been mentally deranged, have, by pursuing this plan in subsequent similar situations, passed them without any such consequence. It is delicate ground to go over, and it cannot be too gently trodden, but I should have been deficient in my duty to the public, if I <sup>had</sup> passed it wholly by. A disposition to intellectual derangement may undoubtedly subsist in the female constitution, independent of the alterations in the animal œconomy which take place in consequence of pregnancy, and it will some-

times be excited and brought into action after the conclusion of the period. This disposition *should never* be concealed from the attending physician; and I would wish to enforce this necessity the more, as to such a concealment I attribute the loss of a most amiable patient, on whose fate I never reflect but with the painful <sup>recollection</sup> ~~reflection~~, that so valuable a life might have been, but for this concealment, probably preserved. But I will no longer detain you on so very melancholy a theme. It has been observed by many practitioners, that the alteration induced in the female constitution by pregnancy, renders it very susceptible of epidemical influence, and liable to complaints of a putrid nature; but it will be a consolation to the subjects of such influence, to be informed, that the principle which has been so much the burthen of my three letters, applies also successfully in this instance; and for the proof, I will submit to

you, an authority, which I know no one can respect more than you do.—Many years ago, when there was an alarming fatality amongst Ladies of fashion in their confinement after pregnancy, your uncle, the late Doctor Ford, was so fortunate as not to lose a single patient. This could not escape notice; and his success was entirely owing to his unremitting attention to the state of the bowels, the necessity of which he had long known, although his inquiries respecting <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ source of disease, had not been pursued by him so far as I have since carried them. His patients in general escaped the infection, and when this was not the case, he had recourse as soon as possible to a smart purge; and, in similar exigencies, calomel was his favourite remedy. He knew too well the value of a single hour, in such cases, to lose it, and the danger of temporising by palliatives with an enemy so insidious and so formidable. For this information I

have the authority of his own papers; for, when he retired from business, he confidentially gave me the minutes he had made in the course of a long, extensive, and successful practice. Some of these, for obvious reasons, I have burnt; others I have read with great satisfaction and improvement, but none with such pleasure as that, in which I perceive, that to his penetration and decisive conduct in a fever, we are at this time, under Providence, probably indebted for the valuable life of an illustrious personage, in whose virtues, a sovereign, distinguished by every quality which can give lustre to a crown, amidst the cares and vicissitudes of a long and eventful reign, has always found a source of consolation\*. I shall now conclude this

\* I should have been glad if this flattering anecdote could have been published by any person, not so nearly related to the late Doctor Ford as I am; but, if truth has not been violated, I shall be con-

long, and to you, I fear, tedious letter, by assuring you, that I am ever

Yours,

Very affectionately,

JOHN FORD.

June 1st, 1803.

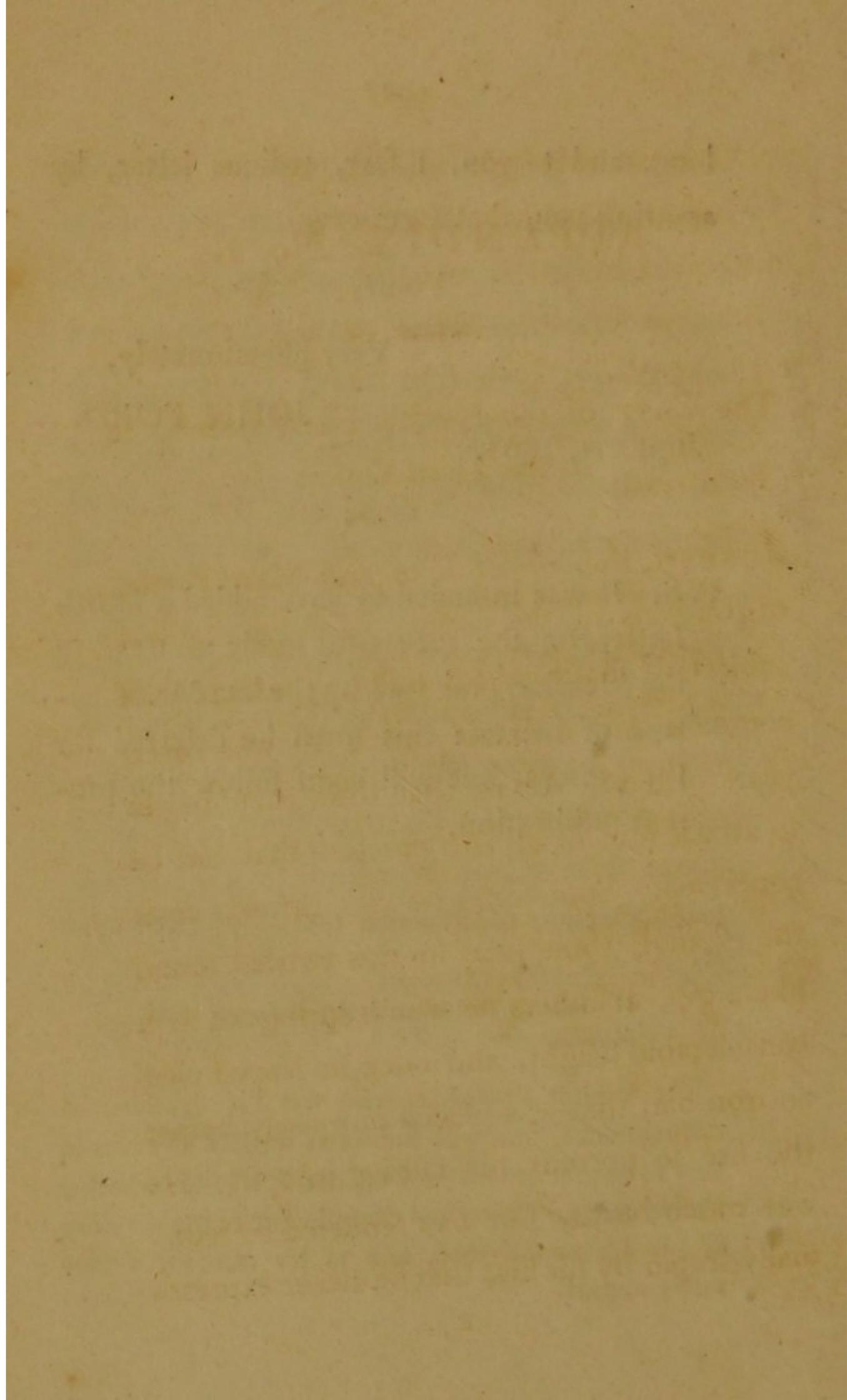


P. S. It was intended to have added a fourth Letter, on the successful mode of treating the Measles, practised by the late Mr. Shapland of Bristol: this must be deferred for the present, but will soon follow the present publication.

tent under any construction that may be put upon it.

His saltem accumullem donis, et fungar inani  
Munere.

Sir Walter Farquhar, who was his confidential acquaintance, and who knows as well as any person how to appreciate medical talents, is a judge whether I have paid an unmerited compliment to the memory of his deceased friend, and to his candour I may safely appeal.



## APPENDIX, No. 1.

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The CASE of the Norfolk Idiot, referred to  
in the Third Letter.

JOSEPH, the son of John and Mary Postle, of Ingham in the county of Norfolk, was subject to fits from his infancy, which were common and tolerable, until he was seven years of age. About that time they began to attack him in all the varieties that can be conceived. Sometimes he was thrown upon the ground, sometimes he was twirled round like a top, at others he would spring up to a considerable height, and once he leaped over an iron bar, that was placed purposely before the fire to prevent his falling into it. He was much burnt, but was rendered so habitually stupid by his fits, that he never express-

ed the least sign of pain after this accident. His intellect was so much impaired, and almost destroyed by the frequency and violence of the fits, that he seemed scarcely conscious of any thing. He did not acknowledge his father and mother by any expressions or signs, nor seemed to distinguish them from other people. If at any time he escaped out of the house, he had not understanding to return to it, but would pursue the direction he first took, and sometimes lose himself. Once he was missing a whole night, and found the next morning stuck fast in mud in the middle of a fen. He was very voracious, and would frequently call for something to eat, which was the only indication he gave of knowing any thing.

Nō kind of filth can be conceived which he would not eat or drink without distinction. He appeared to be as ill as he really

was; for he was become a most horrid spectacle. He seemed to have scarcely any flesh on his bones, and was so distorted, that he was rendered quite a cripple. His parents consulted a physician at Norwich, who very judiciously, as will appear, considered his disorder as a worm case, and prescribed for him accordingly, but without success. In short, he was so singularly affected, that his parents told me they could not help thinking him under some evil influence. It was observed, that his disorder varied, and grew worse at certain periods of the moon. In this miserable state the boy continued to languish until he was eleven years of age, when, July 1757, he accidentally found a mixture of white lead and oil, which had been some time before prepared for the purpose of painting. There was nearly half a pint of the mixture when he found it, and it is thought he swallowed about a quarter of a pint of it. The draught began to

operate very soon; and vomited and purged him very violently for near 24 hours. A large quantity of black inky matter was discharged, and an infinite number of worms as small as threads were voided. These operations were so intense that his life was despaired of. But he has not only survived them, but experienced a most wonderful change, and improvement after them. For his parents assured me in November 1757, when I saw him, that he had daily grown better from the time of his taking the mixture, both in body and mind. Instead of being a skeleton as he was before, he is become fat and rather corpulent, and his appetite, is no longer ravenous, but moderate and common. His body too is become straight and erect. His understanding is also benefited by this peculiar remedy. It cannot indeed be expected that he should already have attained much knowledge, as, before he

was so wonderfully relieved, he seemed to be almost destitute of ideas. But when I saw him, he appeared to have acquired nearly as much knowledge in four months as children usually do in four years, and to reason pretty well on those things he knew. He is now capable of being employed on many occasions, is often sent a mile or two on errands, which he discharges as carefully, and then returns as safely as any person.



No. 2.

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HYDRARGYRUS CUM MAGNESIA, or an improved Alcalised Mercury, mentioned in the Third Letter.

TAKE of purified quicksilver, the finest and cleanest manna, of each one ounce. Rub them well together in a stone mortar, until the mercurial globules entirely disappear, which will be in a few minutes, adding a few drops of water if necessary, and afterwards as much more as will reduce the mixture to the consistence of a thick syrup or treacle. With this, incorporate, by trituration, one drachm of magnesia, and add a pint of tepid water.— After the mercury has subsided, pour off the clear liquor, and add another pint of tepid

water as before; and decant it off after the subsidence of the powder: To this powder add three drachms of magnesia, and as much water as will reduce it to the consistence of an electuary.—After a little trituration, put the mass upon filtering paper, and dry it with a gentle heat, breaking it now and then to expedite the drying. When it is *thoroughly* dried, add two drachms of gum arabic in powder, and mix them well in a stone mortar.

THE END.



T. Bensley, Printer, Bolt Court, Fleet Street.

