

**A short discourse, to prove the usefulness of vomiting in fevers, by plain reasoning, and the authority of the best physicians, ancient and modern / [Charles Oliphant].**

**Contributors**

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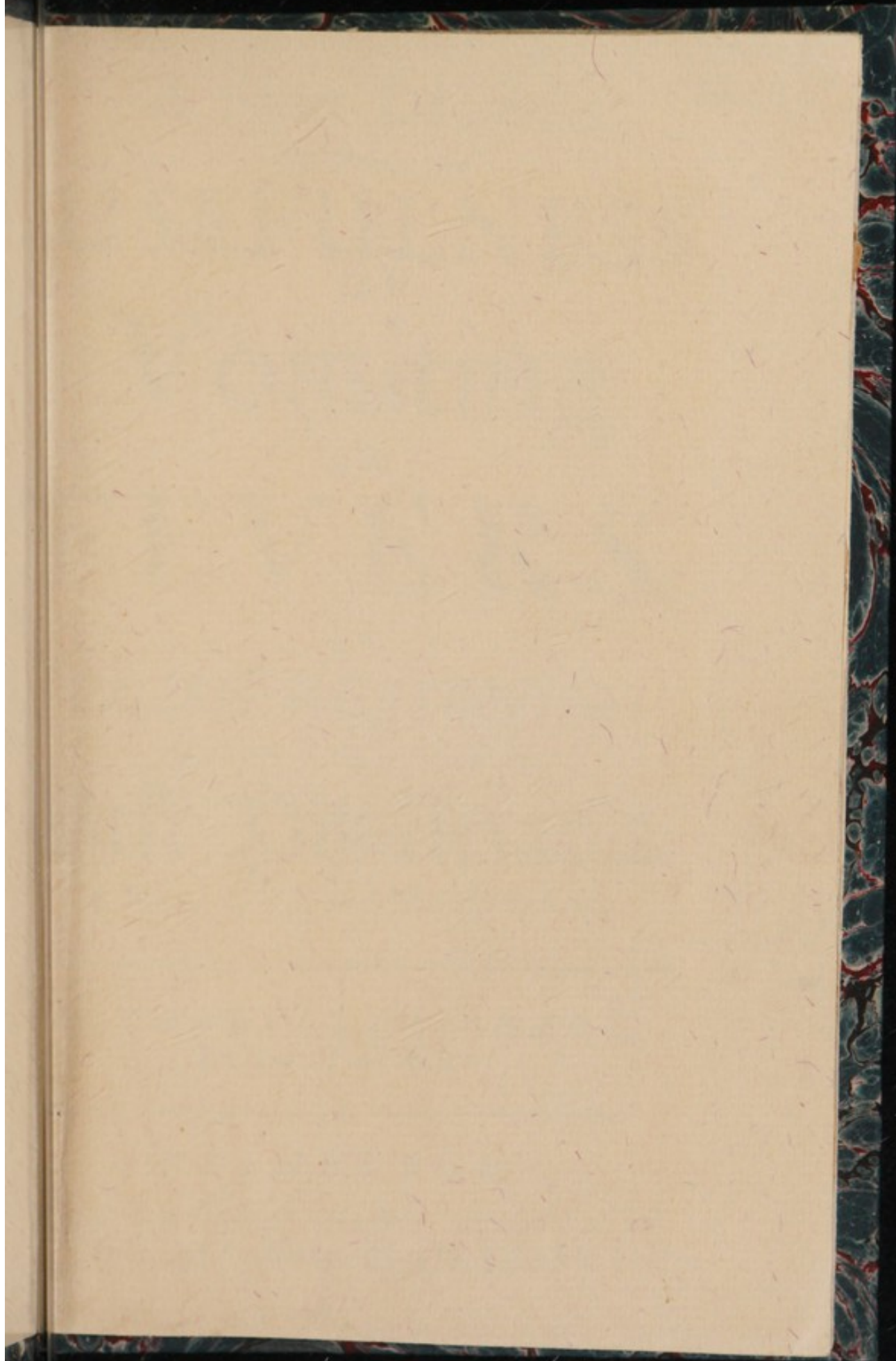
OLIPHANT -- VOMITING IN FEVERS -- 1699



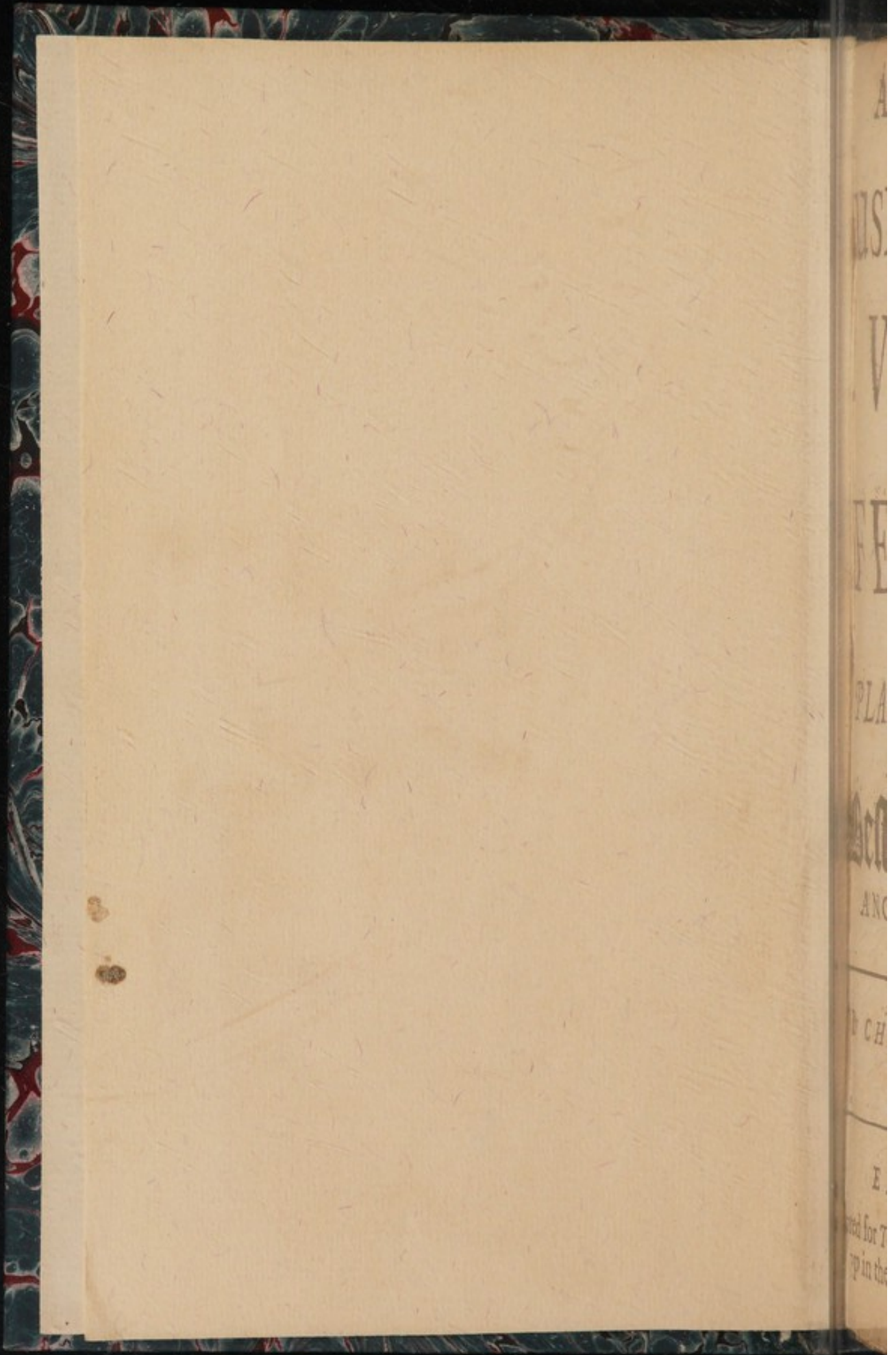




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A Short Discourse,

To Prove the

USEFULNESS

OF

Vomiting

IN

FEVERS,

BY

PLAIN REASONING

And the Authority of the

Best Physicians,

ANCIENT and MODERN.

---

By CHARLES OLIPHANT,  
Doctor of *Medecine*.

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EDINBURGH;

Printed for Thomas Carruthers, and Sold at his  
Shop in the Parliament Cloſs, M. DC. XC. IX.

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EDINBURGH  
Printed for James Cuninghame, and sold at the  
Bookshop in the Parliament Chamber, No. 22, St. Andrew's Church-yard.

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P R E F A C E

**I**T is but too remarkable, That Physick as it hath advanced in Age, so it hath decayed in Reputation. Physicians, who among the Learned Grecians were held in the highest Esteem, are now rather employed out of Custom and Fashion, as necessary Implements of Death-bed Sickness and Funeral Charges, than for any great Performance expected from them, either by the Patients themselves, or their Relations. And the Truth is, at the rate a great many Practise, we cannot say the World is altogether in the wrong: An affected Starch't Gravity with a sawcy Assurance, and a parasitical Cunning to get into the Acquaintance and good Opinion of People, is almost all that does intitle some Men to their Employment. It is to such mostly we are obliged to, for the Discredit the Practise of Medicine is fallen under of late, who contenting themselves with studying the mean and crafty Politicks of the Trade, and having neglected every thing else to qualify them for it, do by their Puny Feats make a great many judge it to be more the fault of the Art than of the Practisers. And indeed it is no wonder that the World is more imposed upon by the Pretenders to this Science than to any other whatsoever, so far as out of the ordinary Road of these who do not make it their Study: When a Lawyer appears at the Bar, or a Minister in the Pulpit, every Body that has but little more than common Sense may be almost Judge of either the one or the others Performance;

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but the Generality of the World does not so much pretend to understand the first Elements of Physick, and consequently can be but a very ill Judge of the Sufficiency of those who profess it. What Applause have we seen a Formal Pretender, when he has spruce himself up with a little forc'd Rhetorick, draw from his listening Admirers, who commonly have not Line: nough to Fathom him; that he is an Ingenious Man is a Character they cannot in justice deny him, and make no question but he is as good at Curing a Disease, as he is at telling a Stale Jest, or an Antiquated Story; but whenever they have occasion to use the Talking Machine, and find how ill suited his Dwarfish Performances are to his Gigantick Wit, then presently they throw Dirt on the whole Faculty, & proclaim Physick to be nothing else but Conjectural ill grounded Notions wrapt up in difficult and hard Terms.

I am not ignorant how much Physicians have lessened their Esteem by the Indecent Scuffles among themselves, and that by Inveighing one against another, they rather fasten an Imputation on the whole Profession, than there where they design it: however this has been mostly the fault of those who know, that it is much easier to establish themselves by Decrying what another Man does, than to acquit themselves as they ought to do, when their own Skill is required. It was such an Inhumane and Malicious Treatment I met with from one of my own Employment, that gave occasion to this Discourse, which otherwise may be use to such as may hazard their Lives by their Possession in the Affair discoursed of. The Story is short is, That I was very lately called to a Gentleman of Consequence and Merit, who had been

a Fever several days before; from the beginning it had been attended with such Symptoms, as were evident Signs of Repletion, his Stomach being overcharged with Choler and other Humors, which of it's own accord it threw up frequently, with a great Bitterness in his Mouth, and other undoubted Evidences of Redounding Gall: Bleeding and Clistering with Milk and Sugar had been the Achillean Cures his ordinary Physician had plyed him with before I came; When first I saw him, I found him labouring under the greatest Oppression imaginable, his Pulse low and oppressed, his Breathing uneasy, and his Spirits overwhelmed with the continuing Disorder of his Stomach which he had from the beginning; in a word, he was in such a Case, that I could not venture to give him that which I was sure ought to have been done at first, and which as yet was the only thing could be done to purpose, until I had procured a Remission by Injecting a Sharp Clister, which had the desired Effect, so that next day I ordered a Vomit of an Ounce of Emetick Wine, and three Drachms of the Syrup of Buck-thorn: This by the by, was not only aggravated with the Frightful Name of an Antimonial Vomit, but also called a Triple Dose, which I leave to be judged of by those, who have the Courage to give more than a Single Drop or two of the Spirit of Harts-Horn at a time. The Evacuation of Gall that followed the taking of the Vomit, both upwards and downwards, was so Surprizing, that in all Probability imaginable, it must have been of Fatal Consequence, if it had been left to the Course of the Fever, to have been carried off by a Crise. After that the Fever went on, but  
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without any thing near that Oppression I at first found  
him under, so that both that Gentleman, whom  
I called to my Assistance, and whose Judgment and  
Knowledge are equal to his Years and Experience, and  
my self gave good Hopes of his Recovery; but his Physi-  
cian, who, it seems, is equally good at the Cause  
and the Prognostick, not only told, that he was good  
past Recovery, but that I had Killed him, and that  
the giving of Vomits in Fevers, was an Innovation  
in the Practice of Medicine, never before heard of.  
So for my own Vindication I have shown, that both  
by plain Reason, and the General Rules and Maxims  
of Physick, that Vomiting is not only to be done  
in most of our Fevers, but also, that it is so far from being  
a Novelty to any, to whom the whole Art is not success-  
ful, that we have it Confirmed by the Authority of the best  
Physicians, both Ancient and Modern. But nothing  
can be surprizing from the Impudent Ignorance  
of that Spark after his Elaborate Work, I mean Apocryphal  
to the Mathematician, as one merrily called it, when he  
he attacks as ignorantly as dully the Useful, Ingenious  
and Demonstrative Discoveries of a most Learned  
Physician, who had given him no occasion for it  
that I know, and where he overturns whole Mathe-  
matical Demonstrations by such Witty Turns, as call-  
ing an Effatum an Effartum, &c. I shall say no  
more, but only tell him, that if he find his Cholera  
moved, Et si

---- Turgescit vitrea bilis.

he'd even best take one of his own Topping Prescriptions,  
an easie Parable Medicine made up of Domestick  
and Safe Ingredients, no Edge-Tools, an Injection of  
Milk and Sugar to bring it downwards.

## Short Discourse, &amp;c.

IT is beyond my Design to Discourse of the several Causes and Natures of *Fevers*, or of their several Names and Divisions. I confine my self only to speak of those Continued *Fevers*, which most usually reign amongst us, and of the Use, or rather Necessity of giving *Vomits* in such: And I think I need scarcely be put to prove a Matter of Fact so well known, to witt, That most of our *Fevers*, from the very first Invasion of them, are attended with a Squeamishness, Vomiting of Gall, bitterness of the Mouth, and such other evident signs of overflowing Choler in the Cavity of the Stomach and Intestines. I am not now to enquire what are the Antecedent Causes of producing this quantity of Bile in the Body, neither shall I Dispute, whether it be Generated immediatly in the Stomach by a depraved Digestion, or whether it is separated from the Blood by the Liver, and poured into the Stomach by the passage of the Gall, that is inserted near the lower end of it; But I suppose it to be actually there now, where it cannot stay long, without undergoing a great Alteration by it's Stagnating in the Stomach, and consequently not  
so



To fit to be mixed again with the Blood as it was before it was separated from it. Now the Question is, Whether we shall Assist or Stimulat Nature, to Dislodge so dangerous Guest, or shall we suffer it to mix with the Chyle in the Stomach and Guts, and be carried again to the Blood, from which it must be separated again, otherwise the Patient Dies.

I think after stating the Question, I need make no answer, only I would advise these Gentlemen who Practise with that Caution they pretend to, not to think so lightly of neglecting these necessary Evacuations in the beginning, the doing of which must at best prolong the Disease; and with all, I would have them take some better notice whether Bleeding ought to precede them or not, That may be Discusst by a very plain Calculation.

I suppose the Fever beginning, and the quantity of Gall and other Humors actually fluctuating in the Stomach; which cannot be carried off by any Medicine, but part of it will mix with the Blood. Now, Supposing the Humours in the Stomach to be to the whole Mass of Blood, as one to Twenty; if you let a Twentieth part of the Blood, then it is but as one to Nineteen; that is, the proportion of the Blood is diminished in respect of that Matter, which gives Fuel to the Fever, and consequently is not so able to Digest or throw it off by a Crisis. On the contrary, if we evacuate (for Example) one half of the Humours before they mix with

the Blood, they are but as one to Fourty; which must make a vast difference in the event of the Cure. This Calculation is so plain, that I shall not quot the Fifth Book of *Euclide* to prove it, and by it I would have these wary Gentlemen take notice, that seeing they do little more than look on and see fair Play between the Patient and the Disease, that at least they would not cast the Ballance on the last's Part, and leave the Patient to manage his Strength the best way he can, against both Disease and Physician. I do not pretend by this, but there may be some Cases that require Bleeding before any thing else; but to do it of Course without any urgent indication, at the Rate as is commonly practis'd, must certainly be of fatal Consequence to great many.

But now the Fever is gone on for several dayes before a Physician be called. Well says *Ma-ter Dolittle*, Here can be no place for evacuation, because the Course of the Disease has wasted the Strength and Spirits, and the Patient shall never be able to endure it; & further, will put the Blood into a great Commotion, and Increase the Fever.

I do indeed Confess the Patient had run a great deal less hazard if these Evacuations had been made in the beginning. But yet as we are all to make best of an ill Bargain; and if the Patient be not reduced to extream weakness, I say it is yet to be done. As for wasting the Strength and Spirits, it is evident, that these Humours mixing with the Blood, to be at last

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subdued by a tedious Crise, must infallibly  
 at the long run, exhaust and weaken them  
 a great deal more than the short Operation  
 of a Vomit; which doth but lend a hand to  
 Nature; and I appeal to any man who ever  
 took an ordinary Vomit, if he has not found  
 himself more weakened, and his Strength  
 more exhausted by a few Hours of tossing and  
 anxiety from a disordered Stomach, than from  
 the effect of the Vomitive Potion. As for the  
 other Objection of increasing the Fever, every  
 body knows, that hath the least studied the  
 Operation of Medicaments, that a Vomit works  
 only in *primis viis*, the suddenness of its effect  
 too, shows that it has no time to mix with the  
 Blood, to put it into any great Commotion.  
 That the heaving of the Breast, and the Extra-  
 ordinary motion of the Muscles of the lower  
 erBelly, and *Diaphragm* will quicken the Pulse  
 and make the Blood move faster during its  
 working, is without all Question, but even this  
 will Contribute more to the Cominution  
 and digestion of the Feverish Matter in the  
 Blood, than do any harm to the Patient, see-  
 ing that ceaseth so soon as the Vomit hath  
 done Operating.

To call this an innovation in the practice  
 of Medicine, is to speak against the current  
 of the Physicians of all Ages, as well as  
 against the General Maxims of Physick. It is  
 true the Ancients knew no other Vomits, but  
 what were of the Vegetable kind; and these  
 were either too weak, such as the *Decoction*

*Hysop, Oyle and Water, common Oxymel, &c,* and consequently had either little or no effect, or these which had a deleterious and poisoning Quality, and therefore over violent and unsafe, which makes them speak mostly of Purgatives. But even these they used, notwithstanding of the vast Commotion they make in the whole Juices of the Body, beyond Vomitive and Laxative Medicins, such was the force of the Indication. It were endless to give all the Quotations which can be adduced to prove this, and would far exceed the bounds I laid down to my self.

I shall begin with *Hippocrates*, who *Aph. 21. Sect. 1.* says, *Such Humours as are to be carryed off, let it be done that way that Nature affects most; if it be a convenient way.* Now, I judge no Physician ever pretended that Redundant Choler in the Stomach should not be carried off, neither that the way of Vomiting is not *lege natura commoda*; so *Heurnius* translates it. In the *10 Aph. Sect. 4.* he says, *In very acute diseases Purging is to be used if the Humour be turgid, for it is dangerous to delay.* Now, what way we are to evacuate the first cited Aphorism shows, and this shows we are to do it even in the most acute Diseases.

*Celsus, Cap. 13. de Vomitu,* says, *Vomiting as perfect Health it is often necessary for such as are choleric, so it is also in those Diseases which are occasioned by Choler, only he adds, That in Fevers and Acute Diseases, we need not use the harsher Medicaments, such as White Hellebor, which was only*

the only effectual Vomitive he knew, & which they were almost always in a dread to give, and by it's Violence now quite out of Use. It is not possible to Quote the Innumerable Passages from *Galen*, and the other *Principes Medicorum* to prove my Assertion, besides, that what they write concerning Fevers, cannot so exactly jump with the Case in hand, it being certain that most of their Fevers were either of the *flammatory* or the *Pestilential* kinds, and that Difference of the *Clymats*, and of our Way of Living from theirs, must of necessity alter the Type of the Diseases very much. So I shall not longer insist on their Authority, but must come to the Moderns, of whom I shall only take the most Famous, and whose Practice is most obtained.

I shall begin with the great *Fernelius*, ( *Cap. XI. de Curat. Febr.* ) When ( says he ) there happens an Evacuation of Bile of it's own accord, the Fever may end without any Medicine, but when there is either none at all, or too little Medicaments are to be given, lest the Fever, by being neglected, change it's Species, and become worse, and of longer Continuance. And a little afterwards he adds, seeing the Stomach and Intestines, ( which is what he means by the *Prima Corporis Regio* ) in which the Noxious Humor fluctuates, are most unclean, it is to be timely evacuated in the beginning, especially if there be Bitterness in the Mouth, Oppression of the Heart, or Squeamishness, or want of Appetit, &c. And, *Cap. V.* Which treats of the things which are to be observed in the Method

ical Cure of Fevers, he says, Not only therefore in very Acute Diseases, whose Matter is Turgid (after Hippocrates's Way, to whom only Violent Medicines were known) but also in all Acute Diseases, Purging is proper in the beginning. And a little after, If in the first days of the Fever the Evacuation be omitted, whatever time you are sent for, you shall order Remedies as if the Disease were beginning. When there is an Inclination to Vomit, what he gives is Oxymel or Hydreleum, the Use of Antimonial Vomits not being known in his time, or if they were, being first introduced by rash ignorant Quacks, they were cryed down by the Dogmatical Physicians for a while, until their safe and easie Operation brought them in, in spite of Humor and Prepossession.

Platerus who lived about fifty years after him, and whom Sylvius, who was not over prodigal of good Names to any Man, calls Magnus Platerus, says in his Treatise de Febris, Pag. m. 77. "Vomiting to these who are accustomed, and Nature pushing on to it, is allowed, and if in a continued Fever, the Gall doth work up in the Stomach, and be troublesome, it will extremely help. And afterwards, Pag. 87. "If there be crude Humors in the Stomach, and the Gall be carried into it, Nature is to be helped to throw out that by Vomiting which does molest it. I shall Quote no more of the Moderns of that Age, these two being look't on by all to be the most Learned, and best Practitioners amongst them,

I come now to the later Physicians, and first omit the Crowd of *German* Authors, who take to be all on my side, *Ludovicus* in that excellent Book he calls *Pharmacica Moderno Secula Applicanda*, I remember somewhere says, "That he's sure, wherever one was killed by giving a Vomit or Opium, a hundred have escap'd for want of them. *Etmullerus de Febr. affectibus* That Vomiting is proper in all Fevers, even in these which are Malignant. And *Wittichius* tells us, "He had often observed, that whomsoever he gave a Vomit in the beginning of Malignant Fevers, that whether the Event was good or bad, through the whole Course of the Disease they lay quiet and easy. He does also prefer the Antimonial Vomits to all other, because of it's Sulphur which resists Malignity. It were tedious to give you many more Quotations, so I shall end with the Testimonies of the three greatest Physicians of this Age, that is *Willis*, *Sylvius*, and *Scaliger denham*.

*Willis* in his Treatise of Fevers not only approves of Vomiting in continued Fevers, but shows by some Observations that it was the common Practice, For Example, the first he gives is, "Of a Noble Matron of Fifty years of Age, of a slender habit of Body, a low Structure, who by shifting her Cloaths in the Month of *June*, was ill towards Night, after that she was taken with a Squeamishness and oppression of her Stomach, felt flying pains without any excessive heat. The Second

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and Third day she was much the same, on  
 the Fourth day after she had taken a Vomit,  
 which was an Ounce of Emetick Wine, she  
 Four times vomited up yellow Gall, and  
 Purged thrice: And so he gives an account  
 of the Progress of the Fever afterwards, too  
 tedious to insert: However, she Recovered.  
 He has several others to the same purpose,  
 which may be seen in his Works.

*Sylvius Prax. Med. lib. 1. Cap. XXXI.* after,  
 he tells that the Primary Cause of these con-  
 tinued Fevers is the Bile which is faulty either  
 by its Acrimony, or inflammability, Sums up  
 the Method of curing them all in the last Pa-  
 ragraph of the Chapter, thus. "Blooding in-  
 deed is then chiefly conducible, when there  
 is an extraordinary heat, the provok-  
 ing of Sweat, when there are Signs of  
 a troublesom acidity, and lastly purging by  
 Stool and Vomiting when the Gall works  
 up and is too Plentiful. Now, what sort  
 of Vomit he is for, may be seen the next Chap-  
 ter but one, in which he treats of Malignant  
 Fevers, where he says, "that in those when  
 Vomiting is necessary, he prefers *Antimonial*  
 Vomits to all others, because of their Admir-  
 able Sulphur, which doth wonderfully mi-  
 tigate every thing that is Acrimonious. But  
 he tells Positively, *Cap XXIII.* "I prefer, *says*  
*he,* Antimonial Vomits to all other, both  
 because they promiscuously evacuat all Hu-  
 mours, and also because they are most  
 Friendly to Human Nature; reducing by a  
 pecu-



" peculiar way, all the juices in the Body  
 " a Laudable State; which Power I Question  
 " is to be found in other things, but I know  
 " it to be in Antimony, whatever either  
 " Learned or Ignorant Men may Prate to  
 " Contrary.

I shall Conclude with the Opinion of  
 Judicious and Ingenuous Dr. Sydenham, who  
 in the Fourth Chapter of his Works, treating  
 of such continued Fevers, as are every where  
 the same we commonly have amongst  
 says, " After Bleeding ( if it should be found  
 " necessary after the forementioned Caution  
 " I carefully enquire whether Vomiting or  
 " ny Inclination to it, did trouble the Pa-  
 " ent towards the beginning of the Fever,  
 " that happened, I certainly order a Vomiting  
 " Medicine, except either tender Age, or feeble  
 " extraordinary weakness of the Patient  
 " perswade me to abstain from it. And indeed  
 " the giving a Vomit where such an Inclination  
 " tion to Vomiting has preceeded, is so neces-  
 " sary, that unless that Humour be expelled  
 " it will turn to a Sink of Evils, which will  
 " torture the Physician during the whole  
 " Course of his Medicating, and throw  
 " Patient into no small danger. The most  
 " usual and Chief is a Diarrhea or Flux, which  
 " for the most part follows in the Declination  
 " of the Fever as often as Vomiting, where  
 " there was an Indication for it, was negli-  
 " ged, &c. Now, says he, The Danger  
 " that Diarrhea lies here, that when the P

ent is sufficiently weakned by his Disease, he is by it further Enervated; and besides, (which is yet of greater Moment) in the Declining of the Fever, at which time the Blood ought to Contract it self, and Exert it's Power to throw off by Despumation the Morbifick Matter, is now entirely hindred by that Evacuation.

“ Now lest you should doubt that this Humor that Nestles in the Stomach, except it be carried off by Vomiting, will sometime thereafter make this Tragedy ; if you'll enquire, you shall almost always find, that if a Flux do accompany the Fever, that the Patient had in the beginning of the Disease been Squeamish, and that no Vomit had been given him. And further you shall find, that altho' that Inclination to Vomiting be over, yet nevertheless the Diarrhea shall cease so soon as you give the Vomit, provided the Strength of the Patient be able to endure it : I have also frequently observed, that when the Diarrhea once began, that adstringent Medicines, either taken inwardly, or outwardly applyed, did little or nothing contribute to the stopping of it. Then he calls the common Vomitive Potion he uses in such Cases, which is six Drachms of Emetick Wine, with Oxymel of Squills and Syrup of Labdions. Afterwards he goes on.

“ If any Man ask me, What time of the Fever I would have a Vomit given. I Answer,

**B**

“ If

“ If I could have my Wish, I would do it  
 “ the very beginning: for by that I shall pre-  
 “ serve my Patient from these dreadful Sym-  
 “ toms, which are occasioned by that Hea-  
 “ of Humors in the Stomach, and Neighbou-  
 “ ing Places; and even perhaps crush the Ill-  
 “ sease in the Bud, which otherwise would  
 “ grow to the danger of the Patient, being nec-  
 “ essarily rish’d by these Humors, &c.

“ But, ( *says he, the next Paragraph* ) If, and  
 “ often happens, by our being too late fee-  
 “ for, we cannot Consult the Safety of  
 “ Patients towards the beginning of the Ill-  
 “ ver; Nevertheless I am certainly of Opini-  
 “ on, that it ought to be done whatever  
 “ time of the Disease it be, provided  
 “ Strength be not so far wasted, that it cannot  
 “ endure the Force of a Vomit. And indeed  
 “ for my own part, I have made no Scruple  
 “ to give a Vomit on the twelfth day of  
 “ Fever, even when the Patient had left off  
 “ be Squeamish, and not without Success: *and*  
 “ afterwards, “ Neither would I in the least doubt  
 “ to do it later, except the Consideration of  
 “ exhausted Strength of the Patient should  
 “ me.

These Quotations which I have Translated  
 do faithfully speak the Sense and meaning  
 the Authors I took them from; and I think  
 they are so decisive, that there is not any need  
 for more: I shall only add, that as Vomit  
 in Fever has been the way of the best Physic

ans of all Ages; so it is at this time all E  
 e over, the Practice of such who understand  
 y thing of their Business, and is daily Con-  
 med ( not to mention the good event of  
 at Gentleman's Fever, which gave occasion  
 this Discourse ) by the recovery of these  
 o are so treated.

Neither shall the Reader take this on my  
 e assertion; for that it is at this time the pra-  
 ce of the *French* Physicians, who had us-  
 to be the greatest opposers of Antimonial  
 edicines, they shall have the word of a ve-  
 Honest man for it; I mean *Doctor Tournefort*.  
 ose admirable Genie and Learning, pro-  
 ed him the Profession of *Botany* in the King's  
 rden at *Paris*, and made him worthy to be  
 Member of that Illustrious Society, *The*  
*al Academy of Sciences*. He in a late Book  
 ituled, *Histoire des plantes qui naissent aux en-*  
*ons de Paris*. In the Preface, speaking of  
 great use of Vomits, and of their way of  
 erating, adds, That France is Obliged to the  
 igence of it's Skilful Physicians, for it's being  
 from the Plague in these latter Times, which  
 t have Dispeopled that Kingdom, if they had  
 to their Bleeding, Ptisans, and Diaphoreticks,  
 with much ado, sayes he, it yielded to Anti-  
 ny, Helebor, Elaterium and Coloquint.

I shall end with this, that I am sorry a great  
 ny People should have so rashly past their  
 gement, in an Affair, which it seems, they  
 nderstood so little, especially when they had

no better ground for it than the false insinuations and Malicious whisperings of one who is very far from being a Judge in these Matters. And himself, or the open talking of some men are so mean as to think it worth the while to be his Emiffaries.

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F I N I S.

