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978-1-108-06735-5 - The Works, Literary, Moral, and Medical, of Thomas Percival, M.D.:  
To which are Prefixed, Memoirs of his Life and Writings, and a Selection from his  
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A physician and medical reformer enthused by the scientific and cultural progress of the Enlightenment as it took hold in Britain, Thomas Percival (1740–1804) wrote on many topics, including public health and demography. His influential publication on medical ethics is considered the first modern formulation. In 1807, his son Edward published this four-volume collection of his father's diverse work. Some of the items here had never been published before, including a selection of Percival's private correspondence and a biographical account written by Edward. Volume 3 contains the first two parts of *Essays Medical and Experimental*, the revised edition of which has been reissued separately in this series in one volume in addition to his *Medical Ethics* (1803). The essays reflect Percival's wide range of interests, such as the application of philosophical methods to medical questions, the importance of accurate record keeping, and the risks of inoculating very young children against smallpox.

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VOLUME 3

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THE ROYAL SOCIETIES OF PARIS AND OF LYONS, OF THE MEDICAL  
SOCIETIES OF LONDON, AND OF AIX EN PROvence, OF THE  
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T O

*SIR GEORGE BAKER, BART.*

PHYSICIAN IN ORDINARY TO THEIR

MAJESTIES;

PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS;

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY;

O F T H E

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## A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

*THE present Edition of this Work comprehends not only the author's former volumes, of Medical, Philosophical, and Experimental Essays; but also many detached pieces, written at distant times, and on various occasions, that have been inserted either in the Transactions of some of the learned Societies, of which he is a member, or in other Periodical Journals. He has attentively revised the whole; has made numerous practical additions; and corrected or expunged whatever appeared to be inconsistent with his later experience, and better informed judgment. On certain philosophical subjects, of which he has treated, much light has been thrown by subsequent inquirers. He has not, however, attempted to model such Essays anew; or to weave into their texture discoveries and improvements, made since the period when they were written. For he deems anachronism, of this kind, to be a violation of literary property; and unfavourable to the interests of science, by creating perplexity in the view of its progressive advancement.*

MANCHESTER, FEBRUARY 11, 1788.

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*Quantacunque fuerint aliorum conamina, semper  
existimavi mihi vitalis auræ usum frustra datum fore,  
nisi et ipse, in hoc studio versatus, symbolum aliquod,  
utcunque exiguum, in commune medicinæ ærarium  
contribuerem.*

S Y D E N H A M.

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T H E

P R E F A C E.

**T**HE Author of the following  
Essays, presuming on the can-  
dour with which they have  
been received, commits to the same  
indulgence, the present enlarged and im-  
proved edition of them. The first and  
second Dissertations are the productions  
of his youth, and illustrate both the in-  
sufficiency of THEORY, and the danger  
of trusting to EXPERIENCE alone in the  
practice of physic. The annals of medi-  
cine abound with instances of the fatal  
effects of empiricism, and hypothetical  
reasoning, founded on fictitious principles.  
But these examples, painful as they are  
to a feeling mind, impeach not the honour  
or

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or usefulness of the healing art; and are chargeable only on the ignorance of a few of its professors, and on the credulity of mankind. The History of the Christian Church presents us with a picture still more shocking to humanity: But who disputes the influence of religion, to promote the peace, order, and happiness of society, because superstition hath occasioned so much confusion, misery, and devastation? It is seriously to be lamented that juster ideas are not formed of the nature, extent, and objects of medicine in general; and of the several branches, into which, as a practical science too comprehensive for any individual to profess, it is now divided. This would prevent the encouragement of illiterate pretenders; would conciliate harmony, and excite a generous emulation amongst the different orders of the faculty; and by confining the exertions of each, within the sphere adapted to their genius and education, would powerfully promote the improvement of Physic, Surgery, and Pharmacy. No profession requires a more enlarged

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## P R E F A C E. xv

enlarged and cultivated understanding, or comprehends a wider circle of knowledge than that of physic. And to the honour of the physicians of this age and country, it may with truth be asserted, that they are peculiarly distinguished as men of liberal education, and extensive learning.

THE third Essay consists of Experiments and Observations on BITTERS and ASTRINGENTS in general, and on the PERUVIAN BARK in particular (*a*). The utility

(*a*) Of this Essay, which was first published in 1767, large portions have been copied into several Cyclopædias, and Treatises on the Materia Medica, both foreign and domestic. The author has reason to believe that the practical and pharmaceutical doctrines it contains have been generally adopted. Two very ingenious writers, however, have lately controverted the results of some of the experiments which he has related. He acknowledges with satisfaction the candour of these Gentlemen; and thinks himself honoured by their approbation of his works. But the points in dispute, he must leave to the decision of others; having *now* no leisure for such investigations. He is sensible that, in the course of his inquiries, he must have been liable to many sources of fallacy: But the same observation, he presumes, is not more applicable to him than to others engaged in experimental researches. And he trusts the reader will perceive,

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## xvi P R E F A C E.

utility of this method of inquiry is universally acknowledged ; and nothing can tend more to the advancement of real science, than the steady pursuit of it. The improvements made in the art of medicine for this century past, are more than equal to those of a thousand preceding years. And these improvements may be justly ascribed to that taste for experiment, which hath of late so generally prevailed. But though much hath been done in this way of investigation, there are still numberless untrodden paths in physic which remain to be explored. And every person of tolerable abilities, who has patience, assiduity, and a sufficient minuteness of attention, may almost assure himself that

perceive, in the following pages, that he has endeavoured with cautious solicitude, to guard against the undue influence of preconceptions ; that he has faithfully related facts and appearances as they occurred, whether favourable or unfavourable to his opinions ; that his experiments are numerous, diversified, and frequently repeated in the pursuit of different truths ; and that they were made at a period when the Peruvian bark was easily obtained unadulterated, and of a good quality.

MARCH 7, 1788.

his

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## P R E F A C E. xvii

his labours will be rewarded with success, and that he cannot fail of adding some new and useful discoveries to the common stock of medical knowledge. *Multum egerunt qui ante nos fuerunt, sed non peregerunt; multum adhuc restat operæ, multumq; restabit, neque ulli nato post mille secula præcidetur occasio aliquid adhuc adjiciendi (b)*. The author might have confirmed many of the observations contained in this Essay by a variety of experiments, which he has lately made on the Columbo Root; a medicine, which from its efficacy, deserves to be more generally known in practice. But his papers on that subject are laid before the Royal Society, and will probably be published in the next volume of Philosophical Transactions.

THE title of the fourth Essay fully explains the purport of it. An attempt to ascertain the use and operation of a remedy so well known as BLISTERS, may at first view appear to be unnecessary. But a more attentive examination will

*(b)* Seneca.

VOL. I.

c

convince

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convince us of our mistake. The triteness of the subject is the reason that it has been so much overlooked and neglected; and though vesicatories are employed and recommended by almost every medical practitioner, yet few have attended to their real action, or to the general principles which ought to direct their application.

THE subject of the fifth Essay, the author confesses, is rather curious than useful; of more importance to the inquisitive physiologist, than to the practical physician. But as all researches into the operations of nature merit our notice and regard, an inquiry into the resemblance between the CHYLE and MILK hath certainly some claim to attention. And if it appear probable, as he presumes it will, that milk is the chyle unaffimilated, or at least very little changed, it may lead to some useful inferences concerning the proper diet for nurses.

THE tracts on WATER, and on early INOCULATION, were published, separately, a few



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P R E F A C E.      xix

a few years ago; and as no copies of the former impressions now remain, they are reprinted and annexed to this volume of Essays.

THE Observations on the efficacy of External Applications in the ULCEROUS SORE THROAT were written in the summer of 1770, a period when that disease was epidemical in the town and neighbourhood of Manchester. The Measles also prevailed very generally at the same time; but though these disorders have been often observed to associate together, and may seem to bear some analogy to each other, from the efflorescence on the skin, and inflammation of the eyes, with which they are both accompanied, no instance then occurred to the author of their union.

MANCHESTER,  
JANUARY 1, 1772.

*ESSAY*