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**Fordyce G (1798)**. A third dissertation on fever, Parts I & II. London: J Johnson.

**Title pages**

*H. i. - 15.*  
*Ex Libris A Bibliotheca*  
THIRD DISSERTATION  
*Collegii ON Regii*  
F E V E R.  
*Medicæ PART I. Edinens*  
CONTAINING THE  
*H. i. 15*

HISTORY AND METHOD OF TREATMENT

OF A

REGULAR CONTINUED FEVER,  
SUPPOSING IT IS LEFT TO PURSUE ITS ORDINARY COURSE.

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Medicina igitur adhuc taliter comparata est, ut fuerit magis ostenta quam elaborata; etiam magis elaborata quam amplificata.—BACON, AUG. SC. LIB. II, CAP. I.

Solent autem homines naturam tanquam ex præalta turri & e longo despicere, & circa generalia nimium occupari; quando si descendere placuerit, & ad particularia accedere, relique ipsas attentius & diligentius inspicere, magis vera & utilis fieret comprehensio.—Ibid.

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BY GEORGE FORDYCE, M. D. F. R. S.  
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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

M. DCC. XCVIII.

To return to the consideration, whether a fever should be left to itself, without the practitioner employing any means to carry off the disease, but only attend to the patient during the progress of it; or whether he ought to employ any remedy to attempt to carry it off, either by producing a perfect crisis, or by carrying off the disease, without any attention to the natural crisis by which it is frequently cured.

This question is exceedingly difficult to determine, from the very great inaccuracy of the evidence of medicine; an inaccuracy so great, that the author has no means of determining the question. It is true that, besides his private practice, he has been physician to an hospital, which receives nearly four thousand patients in a year, for upwards of twenty-five years; and in which hospital fevers are diseases which patients labouring under are always admitted in preference.

It must be observed, however, that those people brought into the hospital already afflicted with fever, have had that fever disturbed, by remedies employed before the patients are received into the hospital. This cannot generally be found out. These fevers are besides rendered irregular by the motion and fatigue of bringing them into the hospital. Those who catch the fever in the hospital are often ill of other diseases, the symptoms of which diseases are so intermingled with the fever, as to render it perfectly irregular. From these causes the author has not been able to discriminate, with any degree of certainty, what number of patients would recover, supposing they were taken ill of a regular continued fever, and supposing it was to pursue its ordinary course without the assistance of medicine.

Supposing, therefore, that physicians were even very perfect in the knowledge of fever, the disease is commonly totally deranged before it comes under their inspection. If they were to endeavour to lay down the evidences by which it might be determined, whether a regular continued fever, in pursuing its ordinary course, would more frequently terminate in health, supposing it was left to itself, the practitioner attending only to giving the patient proper food, and taking care that those other things, which are called non-naturals, to wit, sleep, secretions, &c. be properly administered; or whether he would more frequently recover when medicines were administered, it would be hardly possible, without such a formula, as the author has already pointed out, in the *Medical and Chirurgical Transactions*, to determine the question with any degree of accuracy.

It is further to be lamented, that where this difficulty does not take place, as it certainly does not in several parts of Europe, where the practice falls entirely into the hands of physicians, no sets of com-

parative cases have been recorded. These physicians have not pointed out whether the disease, in pursuing its own ordinary course, those things which have commonly been called non-naturals having been only attended to, has oftener terminated in health, than in such cases where medicines have been employed to carry off the disease. Physicians have been too often more anxious to recommend some favourite practice or medicine, than, divesting themselves of all prejudice, to endeavour to render medicine as certain a science as it will admit of.

A

THIRD DISSERTATION, &c.

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PART SECOND.

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The author does not mean to say that every practitioner, who bleeds constantly at the beginning of a regular continued fever, has this idea in his mind. The greatest number of practitioners follow the practice of those who went before them, without examining from whence that practice has arisen, or upon what ground it is founded.

From this view of the subject it may, perhaps appear why blood-letting has come into practice in the beginning of all regular continued fevers.

Practitioners also have not compared cases of fevers in which it has been practiced, and of fevers treated otherwise in the same manner in which it has not been practiced.

The author has said, that taking away a quantity of blood from any large vein indiscriminately, in any part of the body, neither increases, diminishes, nor shortens a regular continued fever. The next enquiry is, whether any mischief may arise in a regular continued fever from taking away a quantity of blood.

The author having said that the essence of the disease not being at all known, it cannot be said, *a priori*, whether any particular remedy will be of use in shortening or entirely carrying off fever.

It is moreover to be observed, that many practitioners in medicine have been nearly or totally without that education, which could teach them the knowledge of the experience of those practitioners who went before them, and in consequence on what ground the practice of medicine is founded. Unfortunately, in all the schools of medicine, the professors have been more anxious to infuse into the minds of their pupils some hypothesis, rather than a true history of the diseases they have treated of, or the efficacy of the remedies which have been employed.

For the same purpose the patient has been kept in an air of a very warm temperature, and covered with bed-clothes that are bad conductors of heat, and with the same effect.

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