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**Black W (1782)**. An historical sketch of medicine and surgery from their origin to the present time. London: J Johnson.

**Title pages**

A N  
HISTORICAL SKETCH  
O F  
MEDICINE AND SURGERY,  
FROM THEIR  
O R I G I N  
TO THE  
P R E S E N T T I M E ;  
AND OF THE  
PRINCIPAL AUTHORS, DISCOVERIES, IM-  
PROVEMENTS, IMPERFECTIONS and  
ERRORS.

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By W. BLACK, M.D.

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L O N D O N :  
Printed for J. JOHNSON, No. 72, in St. Paul's  
Church Yard.

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M D C C L X X X I I .

SIBLIOTH  
COLL. REG.  
MED. EDIN.

Until this century, the management of those tender creatures in sickness, was left to ignorant old nurses, and rude quackery. Even at present, the bills of mortality, in cities especially, are a melancholy proof, that the carnage made amongst the young part of the human species, has not yet attracted that attention from medical writers, which the importance of the subject demands. From the ancients, Rhazes excepted, we derive very trifling information on the diseases of the cradle.

T. Sydenham, the modern British Hippocrates, published, at different intervals, detached papers on epidemical and febrile diseases, intermittents, remittents, and dysenteries, upon small-pox and measles, consumptions, gout, and several chronic diseases. He marked the prevailing epidemics of each year, the effects of seasons, climate, and sensible qualities of the air, the exact symptoms and changes in the progress of diseases, the effects of certain diet and medicines, the termination into health or other diseases, and in this pursued nearly the plan of the founder of medicine. It was Sydenham's misfortune seldom to consult other authors. In the infancy of medicine, his method of observation and practice would have been proper; but to suppose that little progress had been made by his predecessors, particularly in discriminating diseases, was too hasty a conclusion. Dr. Lind observes, that Sydenham's observations are local, and confined to a healthy spot,

Another, and I presume an erroneous opinion, entertained by this great man was, that the epidemical fevers of every year and season were annually diversified, and essentially different in their nature; that in short, “the multifarious operations of nature in producing a diversity in diseases, were impossible to be traced. Experience and observation, if I mistake not, proves on the contrary a simplicity and general order in distempers, the autumnal remittent fevers of Europe, and those of different tropical climates, are in essence the same diseases, and cured by the same medicines. The manifest qualities of the air, seasons, and climate will account for any other differences. If Sydenham’s proposition was true, and in the latitude he alledges, we could have no established history of febrile diseases, much less any fixed rules in medical practice, or correct prognosticks. Sydenham’s merits, however, greatly preponderate. He assisted to direct Physicians thoughts to proper objects, to observe the effects of the atmosphere and seasons, and the “*lædētia & juvantia*” in diseases;

The merit of discriminating diseases from each other belongs to the ancients. Except a few new diseases since imported from Arabia and America, the Greeks and Romans have left behind them tolerable descriptions of every disease now known: yet we are not to imagine that in the diagnosticks they are without faults and defects. In the prognosticks also they marked accurately the preceding and concomitant symptoms of crises; but in many diseases they were unprovided with weapons sufficiently powerful to avert the mortal issue and funerals which they could predict. In understanding the pathology of diseases, whether from external or internal causes, we are greatly superior to our old masters. That knowledge acquired by bills of mortality is peculiar to the moderns. Obstetricks and surgery amongst the moderns have likewise made very considerable progress towards perfection.

In the *cure* of several acute and chronic diseases we can claim little, if any, superiority, above the ancients. Many instances might be pointed out where their curatory precepts have been precipitately rejected, or neglected for others of inferior efficacy. In the "Methodus Medendi," we have not made those rapid strides by modern discoveries in anatomy and physiology, chymistry, botany, &c. which might at first be supposed,