

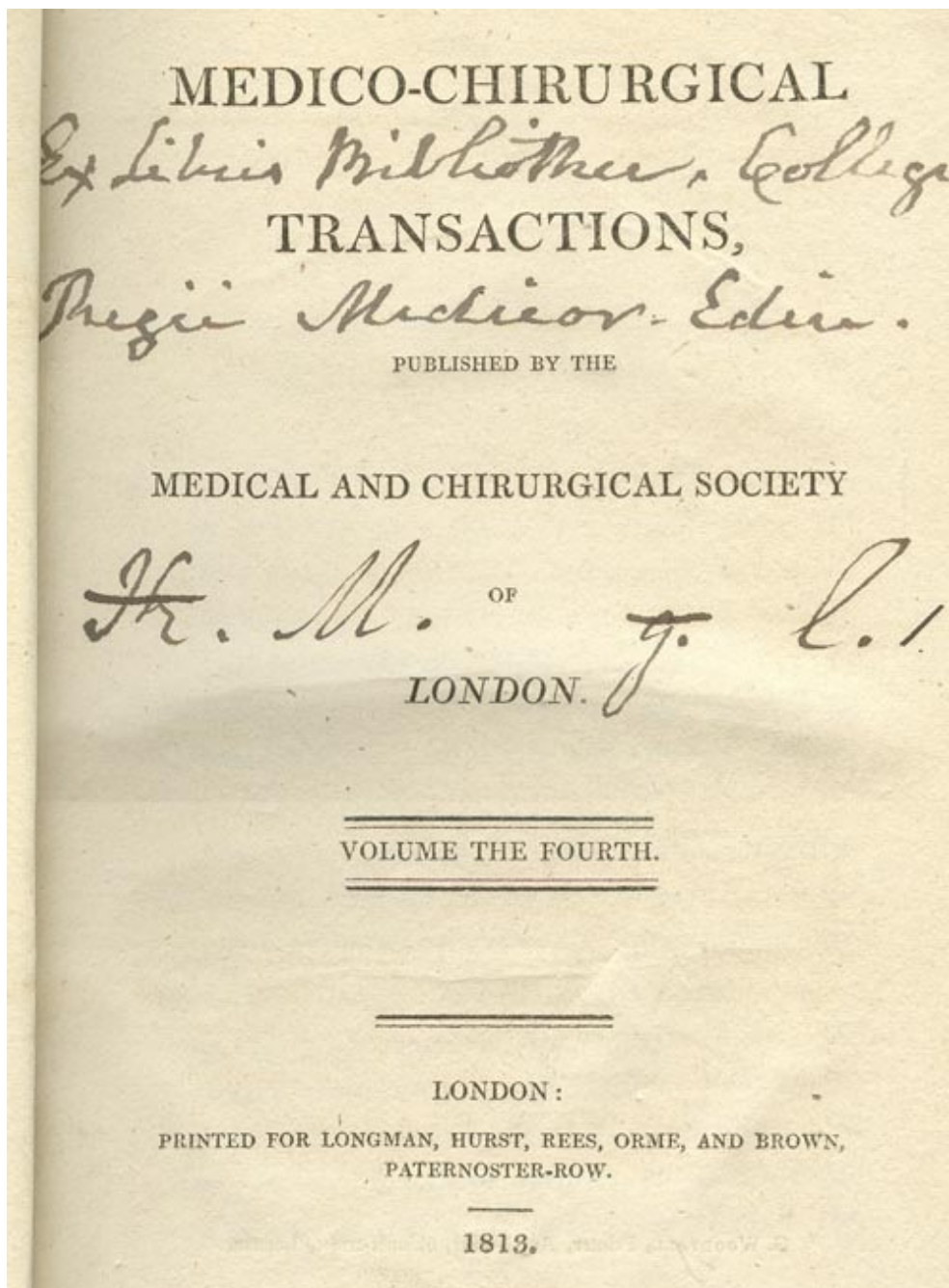
## Records

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**Blane G (1813)**. Observations on the comparative prevalence, mortality, & treatment of different diseases.... Medico-chirurgical Transactions, Vol 4, p 89-141, London.

### Title pages



### Key passages

OBSERVATIONS  
ON THE COMPARATIVE  
PREVALENCE, MORTALITY, & TREATMENT  
OF  
DIFFERENT DISEASES;

ILLUSTRATED BY ABSTRACTS OF CASES WHICH OCCURRED TO  
THE AUTHOR AT ST. THOMAS'S HOSPITAL, AND IN HIS PRIVATE  
PRACTICE, EMBRACING A PERIOD OF TWENTY YEARS.

By SIR GILBERT BLANE, BART. M.D. F.R.S.  
PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.

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Read July 27, 1813.

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The powers of restoration essentially inherent in the animal œconomy, are perceivable in most diseases, and in none more than in fever. This does not preclude the interposition of art as an auxiliary to the efforts of nature, which are frequently inadequate.

The only question is, how much is due to each? It appears obvious with regard to this and all other diseases; that unless we can calculate with some degree of precision the extent of the powers of nature, we shall find it impossible to assign what is due to these, and what to the agency of medicine in framing our experience with regard to the treatment of diseases; so that for want of such discrimination we may not be able to satisfy ourselves, whether recoveries have been effected by *virtue* of medicine, or in *spite* of it; and from such indefinite and equivocal views, we must frequently run the risk of congratulating ourselves on a great *cure*, where there may have only been a happy *escape*. With a view to resolve this important problem, it would be desirable sometimes to leave nature to her own struggles, as a standard for observation in comparing the result with that which occurs under the use of artificial means.

In the present circumstances of society, practitioners would hardly find it either prudent or warrantable to institute such experiments. Facts bearing on this subject, are most likely to be met with in the infancy of the art, before the discovery of the numerous artificial remedies with which we now find ourselves armed, and which we think ourselves bound to employ. Accordingly, there is to be found, in the very cradle of physic, some highly interesting and satisfactory information on this subject. In the first and third sections of the works of Hippocrates, there are forty-two cases of acute disease, in which the patients are particularised by name, and the symptoms, progress, and termination of their respective disorders, are related with the utmost clearness and the most exemplary candor. Of these, there were thirty-seven cases of continued fever without local affection. In the other five, there was inflammation on vital parts. Of the former, there died twenty-one; of the latter, four. Among the former, are included four cases of child-bed fever, all of whom died; and two, consequent on abortion, both of whom also died. Of the five cases of local inflammation, one was of the brain, one of the throat, one of the lungs, one of the bowels, and one of the liver. None of the subjects of these cases survived, except that of the lungs. The proportion of deaths therefore on the whole number, was twenty-five in forty-two. In continued fever without local affection, including

the cases of childbed and abortion, it was twenty-one in thirty-seven; exclusive of these, it was fifteen in thirty-one; and we have seen that, of local inflammations, four died out of five.

This statement is extremely instructive as well as curious; for it does not appear that any medical treatment was employed, except glysters and suppositories in a few, and blood-letting in one.

Little notice is taken of air or diet, and only one of the fatal events is imputed to mismanagement. This was the inflammation of the liver, in which it was alleged that the severity of the complaint was owing to the patient not confining himself in due time, and to his having eat animal food and drunk milk during his illness. The only active remedy mentioned in any of these cases, is that of letting blood at the arm in the pleurisy; and this is the only case of inflammation in a vital part which did not terminate fatally.

This record of remote antiquity, while it proves that near one half of those who are attacked with some of the most dangerous diseases incident to humanity may recover by the unassisted efforts of nature, furnishes us certainly, at the same time, with a powerful argument in favour of artificial means of relief; for the mortality far exceeds the proportion, not only in the annexed tables, but

in any other modern statement\* with which I am acquainted, at least in temperate climates. It is even greater than the mortality at Jamaica in 1808, which is stated at 200 in 494. The rate of mortality, both in the hospital and private practice, as exhibited in the annexed tables, is one in seven, and in several cotemporary statements, published by public institutions, it is still less.—There is no modern statement of private practice that I know of, by which a comparison may be instituted with the ancient, except what is here presented.

## ABSTRACT OF CASES

Occurring in private practice, from 1795 till 1806.

NAMES OF DISEASES.	Number of Cases.	Deaths.
Continued Fevers	267	38
Intermittent Fevers	25	1
Pulmonic Inflammation	145	25
Phthisis Pulmonalis	129	65
Spitting of Blood	36	3
Catarrh	271	0
Asthma	63	1
Hoarseness	9	0
Hooping Cough	31	5
* Palpitation of the Heart and Angina Pectoris	21	4
Aneurism of the Aorta	1	10
Rheumatism of the Thorax	3	0
Anomalous Cough	3	0
Abscess of the lungs from an old injury	1	1
Ossification of the Trachea	1	1
Peripneumonia Notha	10	1
Rupture of the Heart	1	1
Chronic Inflammation of the Larynx	1	1
† Sudden and severe pain of the Pectoral Muscle of one side.	1	0
Loss of Appetite, Acidity and Flatulence in the Stomach	118	0
Hypochondriasis	57	0
Acute Pain of the Stomach	92	0
Laborious Digestion	2	0
Vomiting of Blood	10	0
Vomiting and Nausea	43	1
Inflammation of the Stomach	6	2
Water Qualm ( <i>Pyrosis</i> )	12	0
Cancer of the Stomach	3	3
Carried forward	1362	154

\* In one of these cases there was an extreme distress of breathing for five years, and the pulse fluctuated from twenty to thirty-two, never falling below the former point nor exceeding the latter. Nothing gave material relief. Leave was not obtained to open the body after death.—One was cured by mercury, digitalis and arsenic.—† Cured by bleeding and antiphlogistic treatment. The blood was sisy.