

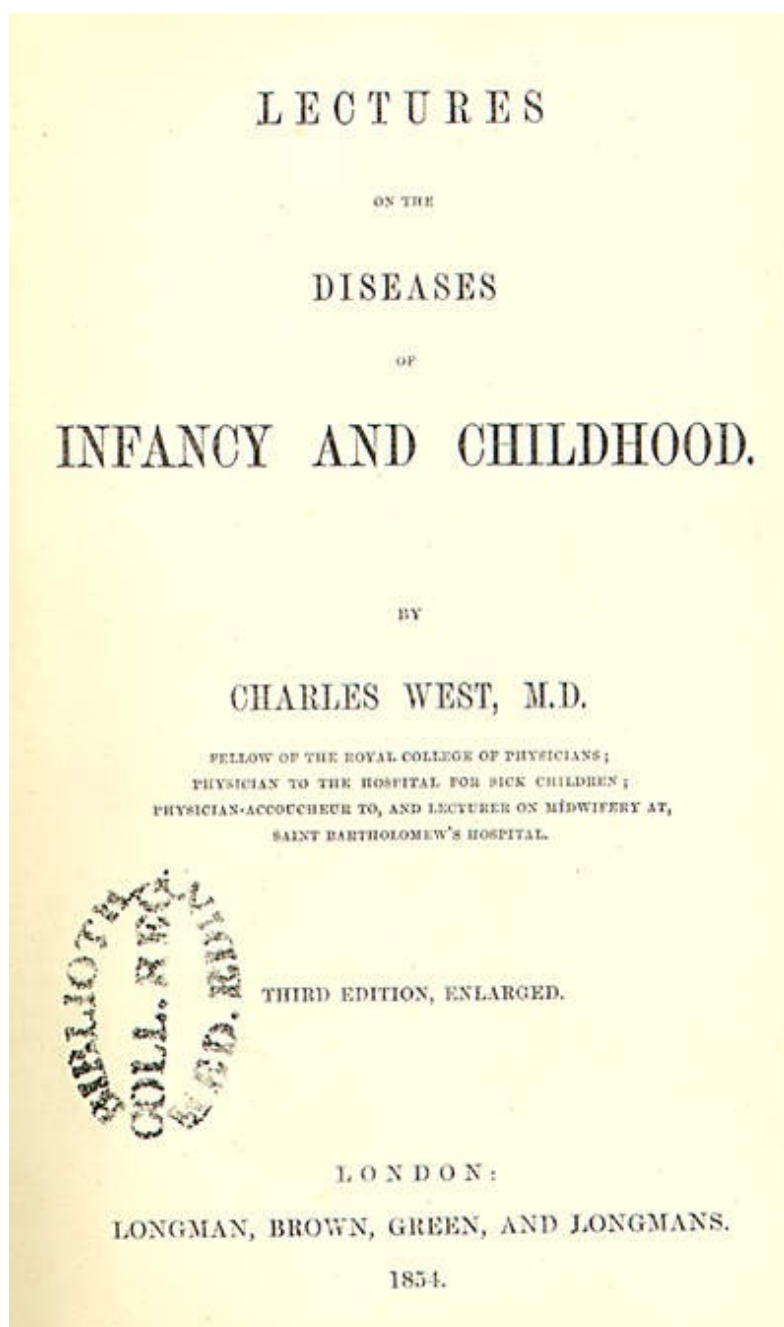
## Records

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**Balfour TG (1854)**. Quoted in West C. Lectures on the Diseases of Infancy and Childhood. London, Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, p 600.

### Title pages



### Key passages

The evidence of its virtues, however, is in the last degree unsatisfactory. There are many recorded instances of its failure when tried on a large scale, while the strongest advocates of its use have never put its virtues to the obvious and simple test of administering the remedy to half of a given number of persons placed in similar circumstances as to age, health, and exposure to contagion, and comparing the results thus obtained. In the only instance with which I am acquainted where this mode of enquiry was adopted, the results, though the experiment was on too small a scale to justify a positive conclusion, seemed to show that the protective power of belladonna was absolutely null. I cannot do better than relate the experiment which was made at the Royal Military Asylum at Chelsea, by Dr. Balfour, in the words in which he was good enough to communicate it to me. Scarlet fever having broken out in the institution, Dr. Balfour determined to try the virtues of belladonna. "There were," he says, "151 boys of whom I had tolerably satisfactory evidence that they had not had scarlatina; I divided them into two sections, taking them alternately from the list, to prevent the imputation of selection. To the first section (76) I gave belladonna; to the second (75) I gave none; the result was that two in each section were attacked by the disease. The numbers are too small to justify deductions as to the prophylactic power of belladonna, but the observation is good, because it shows how apt we are to be misled by imperfect observation. Had I given the remedy to all the boys, I should probably have attributed to it the cessation of the epidemic."

To these remarks I need add nothing. They convey a most important lesson, but one which I fear we are all too apt to forget, in the study and in the practice of medicine.