

**AN ESSAY ON THE
OPERATION OF
POISONOUS AGENTS
UPON THE LIVING BODY**

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An Essay on the Operation of Poisonous Agents upon the Living Body by Thomas Addison & John Morgan

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THOMAS ADDISON & JOHN MORGAN

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THE OPERATION
OF
POISONOUS AGENTS
UPON
THE LIVING BODY.

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TO
THE MEDICAL AND SURGICAL
STUDENTS
OF
GUY'S HOSPITAL,
FOR WHOSE INSTRUCTION IT WAS PRINCIPALLY
INTENDED,
THIS ESSAY IS DEDICATED,
BY
THEIR VERY SINCERE FRIENDS,
THE AUTHORS.

PREFACE.

THE Experiments detailed in this brief Essay were undertaken without any intention of publication. The subject they were intended to elucidate coming within the scope of their duties as public Teachers at Guy's Hospital, the Authors could not but attach to it a lively interest, and were induced to institute the following enquiry, with a view to promote the instruction of their respective Pupils.

The results, however, of their investigations, have otherwise determined them; for they discover, or imagine they discover, in those results, that which is well worthy the attention of the medical philosopher; and which, they are willing to hope, is calculated to throw additional light upon a subject which must ever deeply concern

the physiological, the pathological, and the-rapeutical Student.

They are not ignorant of the public clamour that has been raised against all experiments on the lower animals, or of the reproaches that have been so gratuitously and indiscriminately levelled at the experimental physiologists both of this country and of France. But whilst they are inclined to disregard the squeamishness of those who have thus included in one sweeping censure all the most celebrated and most zealous cultivators of medical science, they indulge the hope that the more enlightened and more reasonable portion of the community will acquit them of any wish or attempt to practise unnecessary cruelty. They with sincerity declare, that nothing but an ardent desire to advance the cause of their profession, and a well-founded hope of its ultimately tending to diminish the sum of human suffering, could have induced them to institute a mode of investigation so painful to every man of correct feeling.

Whilst they are willing to rest their justification on the tendency and object of their researches, it will, nevertheless, be acceded, by every candid reader, that the Authors of this Essay have been extremely reserved in subjecting the lower creatures even to that degree of suffering inseparable from such experiments. Indeed, they are not without some apprehension, that by the cautious physiologist they may be charged with having been carried too far by this feeling, and with having, consequently, drawn conclusions from too scanty premises. They, however, are not ashamed to avow, that feelings of humanity have prompted them to economise suffering by varying experiments tending to establish the same position, instead of practising a frequent repetition of such as appeared to them reasonably conclusive in themselves. Neither have they, for similar reasons, deemed it necessary to confirm by experiment what seemed to them satisfactorily established by others. Mr. Brodie has shown, that

tying or dividing the lymphatic trunks does not interfere with the operation of poisons on the system; the Authors, therefore, have not considered it expedient to repeat the experiments of that distinguished physiologist, but have confined themselves to the question, whether the absorption of a poison and its subsequent application to the brain are essential to the production of its specific effects upon the body. In conclusion, it may be observed, that if prejudice or preconceived opinion can invalidate testimony, it may probably enhance, in some measure, the confidence of the reader to be told, that, at the commencement of these experiments, the Authors entertained diametrically opposite opinions respecting the question at issue.

To their friend Dr. Hodgkin they take this opportunity of offering their grateful acknowledgments for his valuable assistance in conducting some of the most difficult and delicate experiments.

ON THE
OPERATION OF POISONS
UPON THE
LIVING BODY.

IN order to render the object and bearing of the following Essay clear and intelligible, it will be proper to premise some general but concise remarks, as to the nature and influence of those agents usually included under the comprehensive, but very indefinite term of poisons.

By a poison is understood any substance which, taken in a small quantity into the alimentary canal, or introduced into a wound, or even applied to the unbroken and healthy surface of the body, is capable of producing effects deleterious or fatal to animal life. The ideas attached to the