

**RESEARCHES INTO THE NATURE
AND TREATMENT OF DROPSY IN
THE BRAIN, CHEST, ABDOMEN,
OVARIVM, AND SKIN**

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Researches into the Nature and Treatment of Dropsy in the Brain, Chest, Abdomen, Ovarium,
and Skin by Joseph Ayre

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JOSEPH AYRE

**RESEARCHES INTO THE NATURE
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THE BRAIN, CHEST, ABDOMEN,
OVARIVM, AND SKIN**

J. H. 1826

RESEARCHES
INTO
THE NATURE AND TREATMENT
OF
DROPSY
IN THE
BRAIN, CHEST, ABDOMEN, OVARIUM,
AND SKIN;
IN WHICH
A MORE CORRECT AND CONSISTENT PATHOLOGY
OF THESE DISEASES
IS ATTEMPTED TO BE ESTABLISHED,
AND
A NEW AND MORE SUCCESSFUL METHOD OF TREATING THEM,
RECOMMENDED AND EXPLAINED.

By JOSEPH AYRE, M.D.
MEMBER OF THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS, &c.

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1825.

308

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TO
JOHN AYRE, M. D.
OF MALTON.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

YOUR pursuing the same profession as myself, and with no ordinary or stinted devotion to it, would justly command from me the dedication of this essay to you, as a mark of the high respect which I entertain for your professional zeal and ability. But these considerations, interesting as they are, are absorbed by others which are more so. To you, therefore, my earliest companion, and most beloved of

brothers, whom forty years of unbroken affection have endeared to me—to you let me make the offering of these pages, as at once the pledge and proof of my regard, and of the entire satisfaction with which I can now, and at all times, subscribe myself

Most affectionately

And truly yours,

JOSEPH AYRE.

14. *Somerset-Street, Portman-Square,*
Nov. 6. 1864.

PREFACE.

IF evidence were wanted to shew the unsatisfactory nature of the pathological views at present entertained of Dropsy, such evidence might be found in the number of the remedies recommended and employed in its treatment, and in the multiplied modes of their administration; for it may be assumed, as an axiom in medicine, that a correct pathology is necessarily accompanied by a simplicity of prescription, and that the one may be regarded as the appropriate test of the other.

The illustrious Sydenham believed, from his success in a single case, that a drastic

purgative was a specific for the cure of abdominal dropsy ; and acknowledged, with the candour which distinguished him, the surprise and disappointment he afterwards felt by its failure in other cases. Since his time, numerous medicines of various powers, and in pursuance of various objects, have, in their turn, been adopted and discarded ; and such has been the confliction of opinions in regard to the efficacy of most of them, as to create, in the minds of many practitioners, an utter distrust of them all. The cause, however, of their failure has arisen, not from any intrinsic defect in the medicines themselves, but from the defective pathology which governed their use, and in the neglect of those other aids which were required to give them effect—in regarding too commonly, in short, the serous accumulation as the disease itself, and the means employed for its removal, as the sufficient remedy for its cause.

To correct these, and other erroneous

notions concerning the nature and mode of treating this disease, and to fix its pathology on something like a solid basis, are the objects of the following pages; and in the prosecution of this task, I have no acknowledgments to make to any individual writer as my guide and authority, I have, nevertheless, to confess myself indebted for many important facts to the writings of the late Dr. Wells, of Dr. Blackall of Exeter, and of Drs. Abercrombie and Duncan, junior, of Edinburgh, but particularly to the valuable system of pathology of the late Dr. Parry of Bath, which may be justly classed among the most important contributions that have been made in modern times to Medicine.

Of the general views which I have given of this disease, I must be allowed to observe, that, under the amplest opportunities for verifying them, they have been entertained and acted on by me for a considerable

time, and during the last five years, have formed the substance of an annual lecture to a class of clinical students. And this I am the more particularly led to notice, from having seen, since these papers were committed to the press, a copy of an abridged edition of the elaborate *Dictionnaire des Sciences Médicales*, now in course of publication, in which I am gratified to find, that the doctrines of dropsy, maintained in the larger work, are there relinquished, whilst others are given in their place, conformable, in the main, with those which it is the object of this treatise to establish.

Of the essay itself, which I now submit to the candid judgment of the reader, I may remark in conclusion, that it was originally designed as a part only of a more considerable work on the pathology of this, and some other chronic diseases; and that it was merely from the difficulty of compressing it into the required limits,