

**THE GERM THEORY: APPLIED  
TO THE EXPLANATION OF THE  
PHENOMENA OF DISEASE.  
THE SPECIFIC FEVERS**

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The Germ Theory: Applied to the Explanation of the Phenomena of Disease. The Specific Fevers  
by T. Maclagan

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**T. MACLAGAN**

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OF THE

PHENOMENA OF DISEASE

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THE SPECIFIC FEVERS

BY

T. MACLAGAN, M.D.



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TO

JOHN TYNDALL, D.C.L., LL.D., F.R.S.,

PROFESSOR OF NATURAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE ROYAL INSTITUTION OF GREAT BRITAIN,

*This Volume is Dedicated;*

NOT ONLY IN TOKEN OF THE AUTHOR'S ADMIRATION FOR HIS

BRILLIANT TALENTS AS A MAN OF SCIENCE;

BUT IN RECOGNITION OF THE LIGHT

WHICH HIS INVESTIGATIONS HAVE THROWN ON THE SUBJECT

DEALT WITH IN THESE PAGES;

AND

IN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE SERVICE WHICH HE HAS THEREBY

RENDERED TO THE SCIENCE OF MEDICINE.

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## PREFACE.

A SOUND pathology is the basis of all rational medicine: a correct knowledge of the mode of production of diseased processes, the surest means of finding out how these processes may be prevented and checked.

Bearing as The Germ Theory of Disease does, on the pathology of the most important ailments to which man is liable, the establishment, or the refutation of this theory, is a matter of importance not only to medical science, but to mankind.

Hitherto, the question has been treated chiefly as a biological one. More attention has been paid to the mode of origin, than to the mode of action, of the germs which were supposed to exist.

One object which I have in view is to rescue The Germ Theory of Disease from what I consider a false and misleading position, and to give to it its true and legitimate standing as a pathological question.

The subject discussed in the following pages, is not whether germs may originate *de novo*; but whether the propagation of germs in the system, is competent to produce the phenomena of disease. The former question is part of the general doctrine of Heterogenesis: the latter constitutes the special question of The Germ Theory of Disease.

The diseases to the explanation of whose causation this theory is applicable, are so numerous and so varied, that their separate consideration would have prolonged my labours indefinitely.

Under these circumstances I have considered it advisable to deal, in this volume, only with the Specific Fevers.

I have chosen them, first, because they constitute the most important group of diseases to which man is liable; and second, because they are the maladies whose causation The Germ Theory is believed to be most competent to explain.

To this limitation of my subject, to the absence of all reference to surgical ailments, and to the fact that I wish to deal with The Germ Theory solely in its pathological aspects, is to be ascribed the absence of all reference to the investigations and writings of Lister, Billroth, and others, whose names are prominently and honourably associated with this question.

To each subject of discussion I have devoted a separate chapter.

In dealing with subjects so linked together as the phenomena of the specific fevers, this method has necessarily involved some repetition. But such a shortcoming is more than counter-balanced by the increased facility for stating each argument in full.

This plan, too, has better suited the manner in which the book was written—during odd hours snatched from the busy routine of practice.

Opinions and statements which differ so much from what is generally taught and held, as do those to which I have given expression, are likely to be keenly criticized.

That is no more than is desired.

One request only I would venture to make, and that is, that it should not be forgotten that I have purposely omitted all reference to forms of fever which are not regarded as due to the entrance into the system from without of a specific *materies morbi*.

With such forms of fever I hope to deal on a future occasion.

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