

COMPENDIUM OF IITHOTRIPSY

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Compendium of Iithotripsy by Henry Belinaye

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"Deeply impressed with its beneficence, and actuated as the British Parliament
was a century since, the French government, has assigned a hospital for the practice,
teaching, and improvement of Lithotripsy—encouraging at the same time the statistics
of calculus, and disseminating generally the knowledge of the symptoms of its earliest
and most remediable stage. This duty the Members of the Lithotriptic Institution have
taken upon themselves with feelings above all praise."—(Vide last Chapter.)

(PUBLISHED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE LITHOTRIPTIC SOCIETY.)

LONDON:
J. B. BAILLIÈRE, 219, REGENT STREET.
PARIS; RUE DE L'ÉCOLE DE MÉDECINE.
1837.

1034.



TO THE MEDICAL READER.

To remove all appearance of ambiguity, we consider it necessary to explain the twofold character of this volume. The publisher having altered the title, the author has thought it necessary to justify the change by additional matter, consisting of a general recapitulation of the subject, and a bird's eye view of the whole domain of Lithotripsy.

The few first introductory pages are adapted for the general reader, and for those medical men who are not yet conversant with an invention which is (precoeciously) mature, but judging only by the years of existence that it numbers, is still in its infancy. The chronicle, and account of the benefits of Lithotripsy, with its graphic accompaniments—as also the statistical tables—are designed for both the technical and ordinary readers. The remainder of the volume concerns medical men alone;—it is more rigorously practical and technical.

As, generally, to distinguish which of two paths is the most compatible with duty, you must single out the most laborious; so commonly the best moral criterion of a man's labour and object, is the presence or absence of interested motives. So far we have in our conscience satisfied ourselves; but even when the feelings that actuate a writer have stood this most trying of all tests, in yielding to their impulse he may do what is injudicious, or violate that tacit compact, which exists betwixt all the members of the same profession, not to desecrate the sanctuary of its study by throwing open its penetralia to the gaze of every wayfarer. Supposing this volume were merely popular, popular essays have been written of late years by men holding the highest offices in the highest sphere of the medical profession. But we reject the authority of example *alone*, as its sanction might be found for the worst proceedings. The propriety of adopting a popular form of writing must be determined by considering the nature of the subject, and whether by tricking out a serious topic to attract the eye of the public, the author has not endeavoured to attract applause by sacrificing its scientific merits—and at the expense of brethren who bear themselves

with more reserve and dignity. To prove that such an error has not been committed here, we prefix a few preliminary observations.

The reasons for publishing this little volume are the following; first that there exists no comprehensive English compendium on our subject for medical men; that Lithotripsy, as a work of ingenuity, setting aside its humane object, cannot fail to gratify the curiosity of all educated persons; and that in reading this account of it they may be induced to contribute to a highly interesting eleemosynary institution.

In all countries where a high degree of civilization exists and the medical art is duly cultivated, this new invention has produced intense interest. In the heat of the contest about its merits, indiscreet advocates both of Lithotomy and of Lithotripsy have carried forth the subject out of its appropriate seat of discussion — the halls of surgery where it ought to have remained. It is now placed partially before the public, particularly that portion of it, interested in it through their own sufferings, or those of their relatives or friends: each individual being violently prejudiced according to the party with which he has come in contact. We uphold that both Lithotomy and Lithotripsy are highly beneficial to mankind; that they are glorious achievements of the art of surgery, and that the happiest effects would result from their harmonious co-existence; because each possessing the virtues of which the other is deficient, the greatest possible perfection would be found within the circle of their resources. Such being the state of things, we need scarcely add that we deem it far from a derogatory office to endeavour to dispel the clouds with which prejudice has encompassed our subject.

There is a further cogent reason, we have not as yet stated, for doing so. Whilst those arguers who rejoice in the syllabic denomination of (Litho-) tomists are hurling anathemas against those who glory in that of (Litho-) triptists, and vice versa—one faith shutting the gates of salvation against the followers of the other, with as fierce a bigotry as if they were two rival sects of Mahomedanism—during this fulmination of opinion, we say, the number of nervous patients who despair of both creeds daily increases. They either approach these beneficial processes after a long struggle, with increase of their disease and of their inauspicious terror—or carry with them their malady to an early grave. We shall mention elsewhere how many, and what eminent persons have thus fallen a sacrifice to unfounded terror.

We will not assert that Lithotripsy is perfect, and may not extend further its triumphs in mechanism; but we aver that it has far surpassed all reasonable expectation. Can we say less, when, for example, at the moment we are writing, we have but just left a case (not under our own care) where an old gentleman, a martyr to the stone and its fruitless treatment for thirty years, has been restored to health by Lithotripsy when on the brink of the grave.

As to the professional opponents of the discovery to which this work is

dedicated, their arguments can only be resolved into this; that they seek absolute perfection: and until it is attained they will not allow of the enjoyment of the greatest comparative benefits. They expected this super-human perfection at the very birth of the invention!—need we add that they demand it now: they! whose very avocations prove that the mechanism of the Divine Artificer himself (by his doom) is imperfect, and that, even in the moral man, perfection is only to be sought after in the hope of becoming less faulty.

17, George-street, Hanover-square.
November, 1836.

