

**ESSAYS ON INFANT THERAPEUTICS: TO WHICH
ARE ADDED, OBSERVATIONS ON ERGOT,
HISTORY OF THE ORIGIN OF THE USE OF
MERCURY IN INFLAMMATORY COMPLAINTS
TOGETHER WITH THE STATISTICS OF THE
DEATHS FROM POISONING IN NEW YORK IN
THE YEARS 1841-2-3**

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Essays on Infant Therapeutics: To Which Are Added, Observations on Ergot, History of the Origin of the Use of Mercury in Inflammatory Complaints Together with the Statistics of the Deaths from Poisoning in New York in the Years 1841-2-3 by John B. Beck

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JOHN B. BECK

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B39
1852

TO THE GENTLEMEN

WHO, DURING THE LAST TWENTY-THREE YEARS, HAVE ATTENDED THE LECTURES ON MATERIA MEDICA IN THE

College of Physicians and Surgeons

OF NEW YORK,

THE FOLLOWING ESSAYS ARE AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED BY

THE AUTHOR.

MEMORANDUM.

During the few intervals of ease permitted to the author during the last months of his life, he, at the request of his publisher, prepared the following pages in their present revised and enlarged form. The undersigned performs a melancholy duty in thus bringing this work to the notice of a Profession, which the deceased honored and desired to improve. For the careful revision of the press, the thanks both of the reader and the editor are justly due to Dr. Benjamin W. McCready.

T. ROMEYN BECK.

ALBANY, *July*, 1851.

PREFACE.

The following production, although small in compass, is the result of a good deal of observation and reflection. It might easily have been swelled into a large volume, and made to assume the shape of a systematic treatise. Such was not, however, the intention of the author. With regard to the Diseases of Children generally, we have so many books of established value, as to render unnecessary, at present at least, any additions to their number. Among these, the author would particularly mention the works of EVANSON and MAUNSELL, of Ireland, West of England, and in his own country, those of DEWEES, EBERLE, STEWART and CARDIE. The design of the author was, to notice some prominent subjects which appeared to him not to have sufficiently attracted attention, and concerning which he hoped to offer some suggestions of practical importance. From the manner in which the work has been

received, he is inclined to believe that this object has been accomplished. It appears to have met the approbation of the profession generally, whilst most of the opinions contained in it have been endorsed by the highest authorities.

In preparing it for a second edition, it has been carefully revised and considerably enlarged.

The account of the cases of deaths by poisoning in the city and county of New York, has been introduced with two objects in view: to call the attention of the profession to the importance of having the office of Coroner filled by a medical man, and to show the value of statistical reports of the cases coming under his notice. If these were carefully made and regularly reported, it is believed that much interesting matter would be presented to the public, which is now entirely buried in oblivion, and might possibly result in the enactment of some law to regulate the sale of poisons.

NEW YORK, 14 LeRoy Place.

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ESSAY I.

ON THE EFFECTS OF OPIUM ON THE YOUNG SUBJECT.

As a remedial agent, opium has always and justly been looked upon as one of the most valuable in our possession. It has been styled the "donum Dei," the gift of God to man, and Sydenham says of it, that it is "so necessary an instrument in the hands of a skilful physician, that the art of physic would be defective and imperfect without it; and whoever is thoroughly acquainted with its virtues and the manner of using it, will perform greater things than might reasonably be expected from the use of any single medicine."* High as this panegyric is, it is unquestionably just. Admirable, however, as this agent is, if properly used, it is equally true, that, in unskilful hands, there is scarcely an article in the whole range of the materia medica, capable of producing a greater amount of mischief. That this must be the case, is evident, if we reflect for a moment upon the nature of the effects which it is capable of pro-

* The works of Thomas Sydenham, M. D., with Notes by Benjamin Rush, M. D., p. 115.