

**A HISTORY OF EPIDEMIC PESTILENCES:
1495 YEARS BEFORE THE BIRTH OF
OUR SAVIOUR TO 1848: WITH
RESEARCHES INTO THEIR NATURE,
CAUSES, AND PROPHYLAXIS**

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EDWARD BASCOME

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A HISTORY
OF
EPIDEMIC PESTILENCES

FROM THE EARLIEST AGES,

1495 Years before the Birth of our Saviour to 1848:

WITH

RESEARCHES INTO THEIR NATURE, CAUSES,
AND PROPHYLAXIS.

BY
EDWARD BASCOMB, M.D.

"The all-surrounding heav'n, the vital air,
Is big with death: and tho' the putrid south
Be shut, tho' no convulsive agony
Shake from the deep foundations of the world
Th' imprison'd plagues, a secret venom oft
Corrupts the air, the water, and the land."

ART OF PRESERVING HEALTH.



LONDON:
JOHN CHURCHILL, PRINCES STREET, SOHO.

1851.

F

I 64911
B 29
1851

DEDICATION.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE EARL OF SHAPTESBURY,

AND

TO DR. JOHN CONOLLY, M.D.

MY LORD,

MY DEAR SIR,

INADEQUATE as I feel to the task of conveying to you my sense of obligation in being permitted the honour of dedicating this work to persons of your high position and distinguished merit, I feel doubly so, to express my admiration of *your immeasurable benevolence*, as portrayed not only in your public capacities in general, but more especially—the one in emanating, the other in carrying out the provisions of the law for the protection and kind consideration of those unfortunates of God's creatures whom it hath pleased him to afflict with the

direst of human maladies, the privation or prostration of the noblest of man's faculties—Reason.

That your labours have been of incalculable benefit to suffering humanity is too notorious to admit of either comment or eulogy from me.

That you both may live long in health, to see perfected "the good work begun" by you, and that you may enjoy the satisfaction of a well-earned reputation resulting therefrom, is the earnest wish of,

My Lord,

and

My dear Sir,

With the highest respect,

Your obedient,

Humble Servant,

THE AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E.

FEELING it to be incumbent on every one to contribute to the good of his fellow-men, in as far as his experience enables him —

“ Non sibi sed toti mundo se credere natum ;”

and presuming on the practical knowledge gained during a sojourn of a quarter of a century in climes that are not the most hospitable, the Author has been induced to offer to the public the following pages, as his professional lucubrations on a subject deeply interesting to every community,—a subject both comprehensive and obscure,—comprehensive, inasmuch as it involves the consideration of a vast variety of disease under the appellation of Epidemic Pestilence,—“ The offspring of inclement skies, and of legions of putrefying locusts,”—and obscure, as regards the uncertainty which must ever appertain to all that relates to the phenomena of Life and Death.

The Author has endeavoured to place in fair review the various opinions of the most eminent historians (professional and otherwise), and would impress on his readers, that on a subject embracing so wide a field *as that of atmospheric influence, arising from elemental disturbance, together with the boundless variety in the circumstances of human society, as the exciting and predisposing cause of disease*, the present volume must be read and considered as a whole; for it is only by comparison of all the phenomena displayed in the following History of Pestilences, that any thing like just or rational conclusions can be arrived at,—conclusions such as the remarkable coincidences of the observations and comments by historians, not only of the earliest ages of the world, but those of more modern times, fully warrant.

It has been the Author's aim, by careful examination, to reconcile the discrepancies of historians as regards dates,—discrepancies evidently owing to the varying commencements of the year with different people or nations.

In conclusion,—however dogmatical the Author may appear to be to his readers in that which he has advanced as to the NATURE, CAUSES, &c. of epidemic pestilences, he begs to assure them that he has written

from honest conviction; and with that assurance he leaves the subject-matter in the hands of those capable of estimating his efforts in behalf of SANITY.*

** Ο οἶδαμεν λαλοῦμεν, καὶ ὃ ἐώρακαμεν μαρτυροῦμεν.*

"We teach that we do know, and testify that we have seen."

Wyke House, Brentford.

* Sanity is the opposite of insanity.

