

**A TREATISE ON THE  
DISEASES OF THE  
LIVER, AND ON  
BILIOUS COMPLAINTS**

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A Treatise on the Diseases of the Liver, and on Bilious Complaints by George Hamilton Bell

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**A TREATISE**  
ON THE  
**DISEASES OF THE LIVER,**  
AND ON  
**BILIOUS COMPLAINTS;**

WITH  
OBSERVATIONS ON THE MANAGEMENT OF THE HEALTH  
OF THOSE WHO HAVE RETURNED FROM  
TROPICAL CLIMATES,  
AND  
ON THE DISEASES OF INFANCY.

BY  
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TO

JOHN GOLDSBOROUGH RAVENSHAW, Esq. CHAIRMAN,

CAMPBELL MARJORIBANKS, Esq. DEPUTY-CHAIRMAN,

AND

THE HONOURABLE COURT OF DIRECTORS,

OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY,

&c. &c. &c.

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BY

THEIR FAITHFUL AND VERY OBEDIENT HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.



## P R E F A C E.

It may be said, perhaps with more justice of physicians than of the professors of any other science, that there is no one, however humble his abilities, who, if he have had opportunities of observing actual disease, may not give useful information even to the heads of his profession. I cannot but look upon it, therefore, as a misfortune, that Indian practitioners should have been so little in the habit of regarding their practical observations as worthy of the attention of their professional brethren; for from this cause it seems to have happened that, although we have several valuable and elaborate systematic works on intertropical diseases, we seldom meet with such concise practical treatises on individual diseases, or classes of disease, as most of the medical men who have been on service are capable of supplying.



Before going out to India, I felt the want of works of this description, and resolved, on my arrival in that country, to keep accurate journals of my own practice and bed-side observations, in such diseases as I might have an opportunity of treating. I have since been induced to submit some of these to the profession; chiefly from the considerations which I have now mentioned, and with no other pretension than that they are the result of actual practice, and may possibly supply a want which I have myself experienced.

The subject of the present short treatise is one of peculiar interest and importance. The liver, which is the largest gland in the body, is extremely complicated in structure, and peculiarly liable to disease. Its circulation differs from that of any other part of the system; having superadded to the usual arterial circulation, a double venous circulation, and containing within its substance no fewer than five sets of vessels. The function of this great viscus seems to be necessary in removing certain impurities from the blood; and the integrity of its secretion is undoubtedly indispensable in the important operations of digestion, assimilation, and excretion. Hence a treatise on the disorders of the liver necessarily involves the consideration of some of the most serious chylopoetic affections.

Nor is this a subject, the interest of which can now be said to be confined to our oriental possessions. Judging from what may almost be called the fashionable prevalence of bilious affections, one would be apt to suppose that something like an intertropical tendency to liver complaints had been imported into this country. Such a supposition, indeed, is not without plausibility. The sources of what are usually termed hereditary diseases may often be traced to some misfortune, neglect, or imprudence in a predecessor. Thus the habits of living of a father, a grandfather, or even of some more remote ancestor, or a cold which he has neglected, may have engendered the gout, or the consumption, under which his descendants suffer. So it is well known that every one who has been much exposed to a hot climate acquires a predisposition to hepatic affections; and when we remember the number of our countrymen, or of their descendants, who annually return from the intertropical possessions of Britain, labouring under the diseases of the climate, and become fathers of families; or who themselves suffer during the remainder of their lives under the morbid affections which they have brought with them, we shall have no reason to be surprised at the diffusion and very general prevalence of diseases, which have not hitherto been regarded as indigenous in the temperate zones.

It is also possible that the present habits of life in Great Britain, and in particular the increase and more general diffusion of luxurious living, may have produced a greater tendency to biliary derangements than naturally belongs to our climate. But be the cause what it may, it cannot be denied that the liver is daily becoming more prominent as a source of disease in this country: and no general medical practitioner, therefore, can safely be ignorant of the inter-tropical practice in hepatic disorders. In my own practice, since my return from India, I have derived great benefit from keeping my attention steadily fixed on the condition of the liver and duodenum; so much so, indeed, that I feel the less apology to be necessary for the present attempt to communicate to the profession the result of the observations on this class of diseases, which I have now had opportunities of making, both in India and in Great Britain.

It will be observed that I have avoided particular references to the works of other writers on the subjects treated of in the following pages. I have followed this course, as will readily be believed, from no wish to overlook or undervalue the labours of Drs Johnston, Annesley, Abercrombie, and others, to whom the medical profession lies under the greatest obligations. But the truth is, that after having been engaged for twenty years in the active duties of his profession, every me-