

The Angel of Bethesda: An Essay upon the Common Maladies of Mankind

Cotton Mather



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xl, 384 pp. A medical treatise by Cotton Mather originally completed in 1724. Excerpts appeared in 1722 (Sabin 46223, Evans 2352), but the complete work was not published until 1972. Includes preface, extensive historical introduction, facsimile and transcript of proposal for the book's publication, and the complete work, with notes following text. From the jacket: "This is the first publication of The Angel of Bethesda, Cotton Mather's treatise on medicine, more than 250 years after it was written. Not only does its publication make available valuable material about one of the important figures in early American history, it puts in print the only systematic compilation of medical knowledge prepared in the English-American colonies. The very reasons the manuscript was ignored during the nineteenth century, make it of modern interest. The mingling of religious, occult and physical reflections, together with the great array of remedies, bizarre, benign and beneficial, attracted only the ridicule of the newly developing science of medicine. But the interested modern reader, not to mention historian, will find in this monument to Mather's eclecticism abundant insights into the man, the social and cultural history of the period, and the history of medicine... Mather is known for his active support of inoculation as a preventive of smallpox; he also had a quite humane approach to psychotherapy and held what might be called a psychosomatic theory of illness; he recommended the use of new drugs such as 'quinquina' and 'ipecacuanha'; he shared an 'animalacular theory' of epidemics which prefigured modern germ theory."Keywords: AMERICAN HISTORY COTTON MATHER CORRESPONDENCE COLONIAL AMERICANA AMERICA LETTERS

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