

Peter Shaw

Ephraim Chambers

PREFACE TO A PIRATED EDITION OF BOERHAAVE'S
NEW METHOD OF CHEMISTRY
(LONDON, 1727)

Some of the advantages of this work are briefly touch'd upon by the author, in his own preface; to which we shall forbear making any addition, how strongly soever we may be tempted thereto. We apprehend it safer to be sparing on that point, and rather leave the reader to discover them by their own light, than by an officious zeal forestall his curiosity, or prepossess him with beauties, which may be only such to our selves.

We are, perhaps, too nearly concern'd in the cause, to be admitted to speak of it without suspicion: for tho' it be only a sort of secondary credit we pretend to from it; yet there are some circumstances, which, for ought we know, may entitle us to the whole. 'Tis no secret, that the learned author has abandon'd this his latest offspring: tho' it was known he had gone with it many years; and great preparations were made for the delivery; yet it at last came forth before its time. The truth is, he could not prevail on himself to let it go: his excessive scrupulousness was not contented with a nonum premarur in annum twice over, and he had in all probability with held it half an age longer, had it not arrived at strength and maturity enough to make its escape, it self. It was no sooner in the world, than, with all the disadvantages so irregular a birth had occasioned, it found its admirers: unlick'd, uncompos'd, unswaddled as it was, rudis indigeftaque moles, yet there every where appear'd the sensible traces of an exquisite form, which nothing could overpower or efface.

This mov'd us to take the unhappy fugitive under our care; and supply, in some measure, the wanted office of the natural parent. What we have done for it, let others say; the most transient view of its former, compared with its present, state will easily show it. In short, we adjusted and compos'd its dislocated parts; pared off the redundant one; dress'd it a new; nay, and adorn'd and enrich'd it; with a concern and affection rarely shown to the productions of other people.

If any misconstrue our intentions herein; and charge us with a crime in attempting to rescue a valuable work, just ready to be sacrificed to the cruel delicacy of its author; and making an offering of it to the public, which was in danger of being defrauded of its due; we have nothing to reply, but that we — count their censure praise.

This does but put us on a footing with some of the greatest and most deserving persons of many ages, who are on record for the same crime: if their names were rehearsed, Boerhaave himself would be found of the number.

Peter Shaw (1694)-1763) was Physician to George II and George III; Ephraim Chambers (1680-1740), founder of *Chamber's Encyclopedia*.