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MEDICINE

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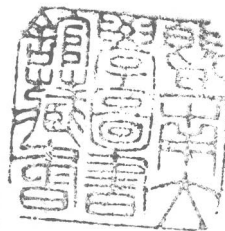
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PROFESSOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

VOLUME ONE



MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1953

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0812028 010311

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE editors would first like to express their thanks to the contributors not only for their contributions, but also for their helpful advice and criticism throughout. Their thanks are due also to those authors and publishers who have been good enough to allow the use of the following copyright material: Messrs. J. & A. Churchill for figures in Section XXVI; Professor E. P. Joslin and Messrs. Lea & Febiger for the "Table of Differential Diagnosis of Insulin Reaction and Diabetic Coma" from the 8th edition of *Treatment of Diabetes Mellitus*; Messrs. H. K. Lewis for the illustrations in Section XIII from the *Textbook of X-ray Diagnosis* edited by S. C. Shanks and P. Kerley; The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company of New York for the "Tables of Ideal Weights for Men and for Women" (Statistical Bureau, 1943), and the "Tables for Boys and Girls", published in association with the American Child Health Association; The Oxford University Press for illustrations from *An Introduction to Medical Genetics* by Dr. J. A. Fraser Roberts; Dr. E. Zdansky and Messrs. Springer for six illustrations from *Röntgendiagnostik des Herzens und der grossen Gefässe*; Professor M. M. Wintrobe and Messrs. Lea & Febiger for the "Table of Classification of Anæmias" from the 3rd edition of *Clinical Hematology*; Professor M. M. Wintrobe and The Williams & Wilkins Company for the "Table of Differential Diagnosis of Pernicious Anæmia and Chronic Hypochromic Anæmia" from the journal *Medicine*; The University of California Press for a diagram from *The Chromosomes of Man* by H. M. Evans and O. Swezy; also to Dr. Koller, the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Mr. N. F. McLaggan and Dr. M. H. K. Haggie, and the Editors of the *British Medical Journal* and the *London Hospital Gazette* for other diagrams and illustrations.

In addition they are obliged to the following colleagues and friends for illustrative material; Mr. L. E. Griffith, Oxford, for illustrations in Section XIX; Mr. D. Dagnall for the figures in Section XXX; Messrs. T. Hamblin for the fundus paintings in Section XXXVI; Professor A. S. Johnstone and Mr. G. Armitage for X-ray films used in Section XXXVII; colleagues at the Cardiff Royal Infirmary for X-ray films from the teaching museum of the X-ray Department used in Plates 40.11, 12, 33, 41 and 52; Dr. Arthur Jones for the X-ray film used in Plate 40.55; Professor Jethro Gough for the lung sections illustrating Chapter 41.23. They are indebted to Dr. C. E. Astley and Dr. J. B. Cook for proof reading, and Dr. G. R. Venning for the Table of Contents and the Index. Many other friends have been most helpful in discussion and criticism, and the editors would wish to note their gratitude to them.

The editors desire also to record their appreciation of the harmonious and pleasant relationship they have enjoyed with Mr. Daniel Macmillan, and of the courtesy and helpfulness shown them by Mr. H. A. Evans, Production Manager, and Mr. L. E. Carroll, Illustration Manager, Macmillan and Company. The generosity of the Publishers in the matter of illustrations and their invariable agreement and wish for quality without mention of cost have been most noteworthy.

FOREWORD

IN the historic record of human societies there are to be encountered plentiful expressions of man's deep desire for betterment, particularly so since he came to act in accordance with the notion that there was in him an inherent dignity which could be expanded through the exercise of his intelligence in gaining further dominion over his external world. Man's concept of himself, of his place in nature, of his needs and of his specific destiny have progressively changed.

It is because of this that medicine is to be numbered among the more mutable fields of human interest and action, for medicine has ever been one of the instruments, and one of the most powerful of instruments, that man has used in his search for this betterment, and especially for the removal of certain of the barriers to achievement that stood athwart the path towards progress that he has trod. Because social aims have changed, the aim and social function of medicine have become altered.

Medicine has enlarged, primarily because the concepts of health and of disease causation have become progressively expanded. The concept of a unifactorial causation strictly delimited all that pertained to diagnosis and to therapy. But when disease causation became multifactorial through expanding knowledge in such fields as genetics, developmental physiology, nutritional physiology, endocrinology, psychiatry, industrial medicine and, especially, in that of sociology, the interests of medicine became so magnified that its factual knowledge and its skills became multiplied a thousandfold. Its technology is now exceedingly vast and it must perforce lean heavily on the laboratory sciences in its service of the people.

These changes within and these enlargements of medicine made it necessary that periodically there should appear a new text-book that would record the new and relate this to the old. Not so long ago such a text-book was written by a single author. Such books were remarkable alike for the comprehensiveness of their contents and for the omniscience and erudition of their authors. It was possible for one man to know all that there was then to know about man and about disease. He was able to engage in clinical description of a very high order and to cope with the available factual knowledge in such a way that in its presentation principles were not forgotten.

But now, consequent upon the deep probings of medical science and upon expanding specialisation, so much is known and so very much awaits understanding that it is beyond the power of any one man to know, far less to comprehend, all. Yet the medicine that one generation bequeathes to its successor must be the synthesis of the knowledge, experience and wisdom of the whole of that generation. If the channel of communication between the generations is to be a textbook, and if this can no longer be produced by a single author, it must of necessity be the wisely edited compilation of the selected and interconnected contributions of many.

To produce such a text-book in which the principles, upon which the whole of the medical practice rests, are not buried beneath a mass of factual information is indeed a formidable task. If, in addition, such a book skilfully attempts to stimulate thought and inquiry and encourages the cultivation of a philosophical attitude then indeed those who undertake the task must command our gratitude and admiration.

For some time now it has been manifest that both society as a whole and the profession of medicine in particular have been awaiting a clear restatement of the purpose and the objectives of medicine. It has been recognised that medicine lacks an effective integrating philosophy. It has become evident that the essential humanism of medicine has not become adjusted with the ever-expanding science of medicine, that the power which medicine possesses and exercises in beneficent ways is rooted far too exclusively in the laboratory sciences and far too little in the humanistic sciences, psychology and sociology for example, which yield understanding of socialised man, the patient and the physician. It has become clear that developments within medicine have been not so much expressions of passionate idealism on the part of the medical profession as repercussions upon medicine of the encouragement of certain fields of science on the part of an industrialised society.

The teaching of medicine, as also the practice of medicine, must remain incomplete unless medicine concerns itself not only with the prevention and cure of disease in the individual and in the group, but also with the problems that are created by the personal and social consequences of such disease. Efficiency can never be enough; there must also be an understanding of the purpose and of the social function of medicine, of the social repercussions of medical action. Knowledge and skill can never be enough; coupled with them must be sympathy, compassion and, indeed, a love of mankind and an ardent desire to aid humanity to achieve its terrestrial destiny. Ethics and morals must be stout threads woven into the texture of medicine.

Medicine is an instrument that society employs to render aid in its pursuit of health, that state from which all disharmony is a departure. Health is that state in which the individual is at peace with himself and with his fellows; in which from the acts of living he derives physical, emotional and intellectual satisfaction. Medicine is involved in the maintenance or restoration of harmony within the individual, between the individual and the group or groups of which he is a member and between the individual and group and the components of their external physical worlds. The purpose, the aim, the social function of medicine are thus defined and the vastness of the territory of medicine revealed; it includes everything, literally everything, that in its action and effects upon man corrupts or tends to corrupt human perfection of body, mind and spirit.

For this reason medicine concerns itself with disease, that state of the individual that is a reflection of disharmony within the individual caused by genetic or acquired defect or derangement leading to inefficiency, and between the individual and his external physical and social worlds. Medicine concerns itself with the genetic constitution of the individual, with the functional efficiency of the individual, of his component parts and of the whole, with the affairs of the ecological system of which the individual is perforce a member, with the affairs of the social groups of

which he is a member and with all the disease evoking agencies, living and non-living, within the external physical world in which the individual has his being.

A text-book of medicine must therefore consider the nature, the meaning, the manifestations and measurement of health and of disease, physical and mental. It must discuss the structure of the society which medicine is to serve and must define the function of medicine therein. It must touch upon the organisation of the profession and show how this is related to its functions as these, in their turn, are related to social needs. It must classify and consider the causes of health and of disease, both of the individual and of the various statistical categories within the population—the individual as cause, the environment as cause, the interplay of inhabitant and habitat as cause. It must describe the yardsticks that can be used to give trustworthy assessments of the quality of the effects of medical intervention in human and social affairs. It is necessary that the good that medicine does should be measurable and measured, for that which medicine does goes far to shape the future.

For my part I judge this book according to this standard, and I find it good. Its contributors are those at whose feet I am well content to sit. To its editors I am greatly indebted. Through their successful labours I have been much profited, both in knowledge and in understanding. Moreover, they have permitted me to be associated with the production of a book that, in my opinion, must strongly influence the further development of medical thought.

F. A. E. CREW

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