

# CLASSICS IN CLINICAL DERMATOLOGY

With Biographical Sketches

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ORIGINAL ARTICLES

This volume presents a nucleus of thought from which modern dermatology has grown and developed. As a source book it offers many of the ablest original contributions to the field of descriptive clinical dermatology. It draws upon ninety-five authors, twenty-one lands, and the world literature of the past century and a half.

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## Introduction

THE GENEALOGY of medical disciplines, like that of individual human beings and racial stocks, too often seems to be a hobby of the declining years rather than a preoccupation of the young investigator. In this book one sees the comparative novelty of an effort on the part of the young investigators to re-discover for themselves and for us, the genealogy of the dermatological discipline. This is a bibliocretic research, a hunting out from the literature of the foundation stones of clinical descriptive medicine on which has been built the edifice of a modern specialty. Let us concede, before some caviller reminds us of it, that preoccupation with the past may become an obsessive neurosis, obscuring the intentness of the forward gaze which carries us into the new, the unexplored reaches of yet-to-be-understood things. The backward look in this book is anything but an obsessive worship of history as such. Its purpose would seem rather, first to memorialize human achievement and to remind us that the growing world is seen through human eyes and felt through human touch. Secondly, this study pays tribute to mastery, the distinction of standing head and shoulders above, which in this heyday of the average, is still an inspiring picture. Thirdly, the study brings out the process of building a medical specialty; the formation of a language, the acceptance of words representing concepts in which to clothe descriptive thought; the vital significance of fitness and precision, the importance of detail that omits nothing, and is as conscious of the negative as of the positive. While it sometimes seems as if language, translated as "lingo," is an almost intentionally erected fence to keep the Ignorami off the lot because they have not mastered the jargon, there can be no question that terminology and accurate description move hand in hand to define significant thought, and to make both synthesis and analysis of concepts possible. If this book can do something to lay

the curse of fuzzy description which has fallen upon some dermatologies, or better some training and practice in medicine, general and special, it will be a beneficence in itself. The authors of the classic descriptions here presented saw describable entities and differentiated them by logic and reasoning. They created for dermatology the basic art of physical diagnosis. They did not take to diagnostic hallucinationism, go into a fugue or fog and come out of it with an "impression" of the disease, which can be vulgarly translated by the American phrase "street car diagnosis." In today's understandable but a bit too eager scramble for the laboratory, it will do us good to be reminded that clinical medicine has advanced and still does advance, by the meticulous study of the patient. Each of us, like each of these, the masters, can bring in light through a window that does not have a laboratory pane in it. Or if it does, as when pathologic anatomy is utilized, it is in observation of describable differences that sharpen and define the picture.

The authors of this work have well brought out their desire to stress the vital contribution of constructive-mindedness to the progress which these classic descriptions of disease represent. It is easy to see the analytical mastery of detail; but to see the arc of synthesis flash across from analysis to concept — this is to be privileged to witness the lightning stroke of genius. Analysis may become picayune, lost in minuscule variations without it. And yet this seeming flash of synthesis has its hard-won mastery of detail built into it too. Fact linked to hard-won fact forms the cable over which the current of constructive thought is carried to the arcing terminal.

One sees in the material of this book and in the way the authors have developed it, great encouragement for the individual, the lone student of cutaneous disease, isolated by, or buried under the routine of his work. The gods still live and move among men visible to those whose eyes are open. A seeing eye can read in droplets of perspiration, in flush and color play, in gooseflesh; in distribution and configuration, in the glance of the eye and the movements of the respiratory cage, clues to new physiologic concepts, and to that vast *terra incognita* of functional entities and linkages which is the future.

There is always a lingering disposition to say that it was all very easy to be a Willan when dermatology was chaos, or a Benjamin Franklin when physics was young and one could snare immortality with a kite. Today, we sigh that there are no new clinical worlds to conquer; all the diseases are described, their histopathology known for better, or indeed sometimes for worse, if confusion from inadequate method be at work. It does seem true that descriptive dermatology has in some directions, published its last catalogue and should have published its last sterile case report. But a moment's thought in application of the spirit of the founding fathers, as their work leads us to conceive it, reopens the outlook in the direction of correlations, leading to etiologic syntheses, among what appear to be structurally or morphologically different entities. Seborrhoeic dermatitis is still seborrhoeic dermatitis, but its concentration in the flush area of the center face brings in that fascinating play of psychosomatic factors that has been coming to light in recent years as the rosacea complex. It is possible to construct spectra of so-called disease entities which have morphologic being, but represent, so to speak, differing wave lengths of a yet to be discovered common element or agency. Such a spectrum is an idea to toy with in the range between lichen planus, through lichen sclerosus et atrophicus, to morphea and the sclerodermas. The staphylodermias constitute another field ripe for morphologic integrations.

With the stage set for clinical progress, assisted but not replaced by the laboratory, an inspiration to thoroughness in analysis, rigor in differential logic and constructive vision such as these vignettes of the master in action in the past, is more than timely. It is a spur to an even more distinguished future.

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## Preface

NO PREVIOUS attempt has been made to gather together, in English, the most significant of the clinical dermatologic writings. The task is one of selection. For some diseases there is no really definitive account; they have been a part of man's common store of knowledge since he began to record it. For others, such accounts exist, and it is with these that we have been concerned. The establishment of a disease picture requires of the observer the power to perceive the new as new, and although the 95 men whose 143 descriptions are presented here differed in every conceivable way — race, age, time, background, education, temperament, and ability — they had that one faculty in common.

The diseases depicted vary from daily clinic fare to the rarest of the rare. Some are case reports, lucky finds for individuals whose names are perpetuated because of a fortunate afternoon in the ambulatorium. Others are the fruit of countless hours in the meticulous study of many patients, the application of the mature mind to diversities and similarities in clinical material, masterpieces of conceptual and correlative thinking.

We have begun our work with Robert Willan's *On Cutaneous Diseases*. If there be any date in history to which one can point and say, "Here is the beginning of modern dermatology," it is 1796, the year in which he began his treatise. With few exceptions, cutaneous disease descriptions prior to this time are difficult to identify, with any real assurance, with the entities we accept today. Willan's own indictment of his predecessors and contemporaries seems justified:

"They employ the same terms in very different significations. They also make artificial, and often inconsistent arrangements, some reducing all the diseases under two or three genera, while others, too studious of amplification, apply new names to different stages of appearances of the same complaint. Those who attempt to theorize on the subject are seldom clear and satisfactory."

In the editing of the articles we have been very careful to preserve continuity. Histologic and purely laboratory particulars have been omitted. The important clinical material has been presented in its entirety, except in those few cases in which needless repetition was encountered. These accounts are not synopses. Every sentence appears exactly as its author wrote it. The length of the descriptions is not always proportional to the frequency of the disease, nor to its importance. It is, rather, a reflection of the enthusiasm and temperament of the author, or of the color inherent in the material he had at hand. Descriptions of the manifestations of syphilis have not been included. We feel that they merit a separate volume.

Unless otherwise stated, the translations given are our own. In this matter we have attempted, like all translators, to find that middle road between a rendering so stiff and literal as to be unreadable, and one so free that it can no longer be considered the work of the original author. Footnotes to the articles indicate the publication in which they appeared, and those to the biographies indicate the chief sources from which the biographical material was drawn.

That many of the greatest names in dermatology are missing from these pages is not to be construed as an indication of incompleteness. There are those whose talents have been directed always toward the elaboration, the detailing, the polishing of these disease entities, and toward the ultimate purpose of it all, the treatment of the patient. Others have devoted their lives to the advancement of our knowledge in the laboratory. The tremendous progress the specialty has made in the past 150 years has been due to this happy combination of careful clinical study and inspired laboratory activity.

WALTER B. SHELLEY  
JOHN T. CRISSEY



## Acknowledgments

OUR FIRST acknowledgment is to the men from whose writings this chrestomathy has been prepared. It is made with the great admiration and respect their work commands.

It would never have been possible to make the literary acquaintance of many of these authors without the magnificent facilities afforded us by the library of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. Here, with the kindly and efficient assistance of Mrs. M. G. Maines, reference librarian, the many tomes, texts, and journals pertinent to the work were consulted. We are grateful to W. B. McDaniel, II, Ph.D., chief librarian, to Elliott Morse, assistant librarian, and to the entire staff for their continued interest and assistance in this undertaking. It was their realization, as well as our own, that this volume would give the reader some small idea of the College of Physicians' dermatologic treasure trove.

Dr. Donald M. Pillsbury, professor and director of the department of dermatology and syphilology of the University of Pennsylvania, School of Medicine, has aided us at every turn. Our special appreciation is due him for the ways he found to remove the administrative difficulties which always beset a work of this kind.

Professor John H. Stokes has earned our gratitude by his gracious consent to prepare the foreword to this volume.

Miss Edna Brand has been our right hand. To her we are deeply indebted for a technically superb manuscript. Her enthusiasm, expertness, and exquisite attention to detail have been a delight to us.

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W.B.S.  
J.T.C.

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