

**HEALTH PRIMERS.
THE SKIN AND ITS
TROUBLES**

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Health Primers. The Skin and Its Troubles by Various

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EDITORS.

J. LANGDON DOWN, M.D., F.R.C.P. | HENRY POWER, M.B., F.R.C.S.

J. MORTIMER-GRANVILLE, M.D. | JOHN TWEEDY, F.R.C.S.

THE SKIN AND ITS TROUBLES.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE SERIES:

W. H. ALLCHIN, M.B. Lond., M.R.C.S.	W. S. GREENFIELD, M.D. Lond., F.R.C.P.
G. W. BALFOUR, M.D. St. And., F.R.C.P. Edin.	C. W. HEATON, F.C.S., F.I.C.
J. CRICHTON-BROWNE, M.D. Edin., LL.D., F.R.S. Edin.	HARRY LEACH, M.R.C.P.
SIDNEY COUPLAND, M.D. Lond., M.R.C.P.	C. V. POORE, M.D. Lond., F.R.C.P.
JOHN CURNOW, M.D. Lond., F.R.C.P.	HENRY POWER, M.B. Lond., F.R.C.S.
J. LANGDON DOWN, M.D. Lond., F.R.C.P.	W. L. PURVES, M.D. Edin., M.R.C.S.
R. FARQUHARSON, M.D. Edin., M.R.C.P.	J. NETTEN RADCLIFFE, Ex-Pres. Epid. Soc., &c.
TILBURY FOX, M.D. Lond., F.R.C.P.	C. H. RALFE, M.A., M.D. Cantab., F.R.C.P.
J. MORTIMER-GRANVILLE, M.D. St. And., F.G.S., F.S.S.	S. RINGER, M.D. Lond., F.R.C.P.
	JOHN TWEEDY, F.R.C.S.
	JOHN WILLIAMS, M.D. Lond., F.R.C.P.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.	5
THE STRUCTURE OF THE SKIN	12
THE FUNCTIONS OF THE SKIN	22
PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS TO THE CONDITIONS OF DAILY LIFE	30
SKIN TROUBLES FROM POISONOUS CLOTHING, INJUDICIOUS USE OF DOMESTIC REMEDIES, ETC.	45
THE HAIR	55
THE ORDINARY MANAGEMENT OF THE HAIR	63

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THE SKIN AND ITS TROUBLES.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE knowledge possessed by the public of the important part played by the skin in the human economy has been, and is still, to a great extent of the most limited description. But thanks to the happy spread of education throughout the country by books, parliamentary measures, and the energy of philanthropists, those conditions of health, which lie in our own hands, are becoming more widely known. Not only is the skin a very important organ as regards its functions, but it excites peculiar interest from its position at the exterior of the body, in that its condition often serves as an index of the departure from a healthy standard of any internal organ, and is also the channel whereby so many powerful influences from without act on the body, promoting health or exciting disease.

In ancient nations, such as the Egyptians, Hindoos, and Hebrews, personal cleanliness and other sanitary

principles were exercised under the form of religious ceremonies, and the priest was the physician. Under the Mosaic economy, ceremonial purification was enjoined on the Jews, and many other nations possess, like them, most minute regulations respecting ablution. In some nations, as the Roman, where the bath acquired such a preponderating position in social life, cleanliness was the outcome of the laws of society which made the bath the fashionable and pleasurable resort. In later years amongst the more civilized nations also personal cleanliness has been cultivated more in deference to society, which demands a clean inodorous skin and prepossessing exterior, than the duty of obeying one of the first principles of health. If we have gained in precise knowledge of the importance of the skin, we have as certainly fallen back in the care and trouble we bestow on it. The time is, however, beginning to dawn when these matters shall be carried out on the true foundations of physiological knowledge, which is steadily fashioning the habits of Englishmen in the cultivation of health.

The practical outcome of an increasing knowledge has been seen in the Public Baths and Wash-house Movement, which has had such an enormous influence on the habits of the people since the first bath of the kind in London was established in 1845 in the Docks. It has been remarked that "it is too little to say that these

institutions are calculated to carry cleanliness into the humble abode of the labouring classes ; they do infinitely more than this ; they pour forth a stream of health, of happiness, of thoughtfulness ; they elevate the moral position of those by whom they are used, and the numberless benefits which they confer are not only enjoyed by those who receive, but are reflected upwards and around upon society at large." If the non-medical reader wants to find facts detailed as to the well-known degrading influences of want of personal cleanliness on the moral nature, and the intimate connexion existing between a clean skin, a clean home, and morality, let him turn to Mr. Chadwick's Report on "The Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain, in 1842." There he will also gather how much still remains to be done, notwithstanding the great advances made since that date, in bringing the *means of cleanliness* to every home, by developing the erection of baths of all kinds and wash-houses more completely, by bringing water in abundance to every door, and by seeing that every man, whatever his condition in life, has a home that can be kept clean if he will. For although a general steady improvement has been effected amongst all classes of the population in the filthy habits and dwellings of the middle ages, the more rapid advance of the last thirty years has not affected the very poor equally with the middle classes. Mr. Chad-