

**THE FUNCTIONS AND DISORDERS OF THE
REPRODUCTIVE ORGANS IN
CHILDHOOD, YOUTH, ADULT
AGE, AND ADVANCED LIFE.
CONSIDERED IN THEIR PHYSIOLOGICAL,
SOCIAL, AND MORAL RELATIONS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649590254

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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WILLIAM ACTON

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MORAL RELATIONS.

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PHILADELPHIA:
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PREFACE

TO

THE THIRD EDITION.

IN the preface to the second edition of this book I expressed a hope that I might at some future time be able, not only to incorporate much new matter in the text, and make many needful improvements and alterations, but entirely to remodel the work. The flattering reception by the profession of two large impressions, warns me that the time has arrived for carrying out my intention. The mass of new material which has accumulated during the four years that have elapsed since I published the first edition, and, perhaps, the more matured views on some points which longer experience and thought have furnished, render me still more desirous of moulding my book into something of the shape in which I should wish permanently to leave it. I have accordingly spared neither labor nor time in my endeavor to render this edition more worthy of the favor which has been so liberally extended to its predecessors.

I may, perhaps, be permitted to add that the largest part of the time and pains the book has cost me, has been bestowed on the minute weighing of every sentence, in the hope that in my treatment of a subject so novel and difficult, and in many respects painful, nothing may remain to which fastidiousness itself can *fairly* object.

I gladly take this opportunity of acknowledging the frank and loyal spirit in which my professional brethren, and, with one exception, the periodical press, recognized the difficulty of the question, and appreciated my attempt to treat it as it requires. They heartily expressed their participa-

tion in my hope that the book might have some good and practical effect on public health and public morals. It has been on its trial now for some years, and I commit this third edition to my profession with that hope increased to confidence, and with hearty thanks to the many friends, both scientific and professional, who have furnished me with information and advice.

17 QUEEN ANN STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.

PREFACE

TO

THE FIRST EDITION.

IN the second edition of my work on the Diseases of the Urinary and Generative Organs, I ventured for the first time to treat of their functional disorders. Since that period I have invariably noted down in private practice such cases as presented features of peculiar interest, and have collected much additional material bearing on this hitherto neglected subject. The results are comprised in the present volume. The reader will in the first place find that I have described the normal functions of the sexual organs at the various periods of life, drawing illustrations from the most recent writings of Owen, Carpenter, and Rymer Jones. Thus guided by true physiological principles, and supported by the enlarged views which comparative anatomy now gives us of the generative functions, I have treated at length of the aberrations to which they are liable. In so doing I have not relied on my own observations only, but have quoted largely from the works of Lallemand, and Reveillé Parise; preferring that they should share the responsibility of many statements which I could establish on my own experience. Hence I would fain hope that the professional reader, who takes up this work in a serious, thoughtful, and what I would term a loyal spirit, will not rise from its perusal without having derived considerable information. Should these pages accidentally fall into the hands of laymen of sense and information, many of the facts and opinions to be found therein will, I apprehend, prove at least suggestive. The continent student will find reasons for continuing to live according to the dictates of virtue. The dissolute will be taught, on positive and irrefragable grounds, the value of self-control. The married man

will find advice and guidance; and the bachelor, who is often placed in a trying social position, will glean consolation from observing that not only are his sexual sufferings appreciated and understood, but that rules are given him for their mitigation. The physiologist will see his principles reduced to practice. The comparative anatomist will judge how much light his investigations on the animal kingdom have thrown upon sexual relations in Man. The surgeon will learn how to manage that difficult class the hypochondriacal, and how to address himself to the audacious old libertine who, setting at naught religious principle and social customs, acts in open defiance of the laws of his country. Lastly, the advocate who practices in the ecclesiastical or criminal courts will here find the basis for many valuable arguments,—nay more, he may learn how, in many cases of guilt, fair cause may be shown for a culprit's committal to a lunatic asylum instead of to a prison.

I should be ungrateful indeed were I to neglect this opportunity of thanking Drs. Carpenter and Farr, and Messrs. Owen, Paget, Quekett, Simonds, Thompson, and Varnoll, for their personal communication of facts gathered in their various departments of science; and I would take the opportunity of stating that I shall be happy to receive from any of my professional brethren facts illustrating the many delicate questions that are now for the first time formally discussed.

In conclusion, I would remark, that if in the following pages I shall be judged to have fulfilled a title of what I proposed to myself, I shall have the satisfaction of thinking that, following in the footsteps of John Hunter, Parent-Duchâtelet, and Ricord, I have advanced the study and practice of that department of medicine with which their names will ever be connected.

INTRODUCTION.

I HAVE in the following pages treated of the *Functions* and *Disorders*, as distinguished from the *Anatomy* and *Pathology* of the reproductive organs. On the latter topics there are many excellent and exhaustive works, but the former still need much elucidation. Until lately, indeed, many standard surgical writers on the generative* system have practically ignored the functional aspect of their subject; dealing with the whole of the wonderful and complex machinery of which they treat as if the offices it fulfills, the thousand feelings it affects, the countless social, moral, and scientific interests with which it is so intimately connected, were of little or no moment. Others copy their predecessors, and perpetuate statements little in accordance with the advanced state of science at the present time.

One reason of this reticence is obvious enough. The subject has been considered delicate—dangerous—unseemly—just as well let alone, even in scientific works.

Of course there have been notable and honorable exceptions to this (as I cannot but think) rather cowardly, if not prudish, neglect of so large and important a branch of the boundless science of humanity. Foremost, perhaps, among these, I may be permitted to specify Dr. Carpenter. In the later editions of his "Physiology," that eminent author has boldly met the difficulties of the subject. Far, for instance, from ignoring the existence of sexual feelings, he has investigated them in the same calm and philo-

* In the following pages the words "generative," "sexual," "reproductive," will be used synonymously; there are some instances in which distinctions may be made between them, but these are so slight, I need not further allude to them.