

**A TREATISE ON ACUTE  
AND CHRONIC  
DISEASES OF THE  
NECK OF THE UTERUS**

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A Treatise on Acute and Chronic Diseases of the Neck of the Uterus by Charles D. Meigs

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**CHARLES D. MEIGS**

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AND CHRONIC  
DISEASES OF THE  
NECK OF THE UTERUS**



TO

ROBERT M. HUSTON, M.D.,

PROFESSOR OF THERAPEUTICS AND THE MATERIA MEDICA IN JEFFERSON MEDICAL  
COLLEGE AT PHILADELPHIA.

MY DEAR SIR:—

You are aware, I believe, that by command of the American Medical Association, I was directed, as chairman of a committee appointed at Charleston, South Carolina, to present a Report to that body on the subject of Acute and Chronic Diseases of the Cervix Uteri.

Professor Channing, of Boston, and Dr. Thomas H. Yardley, of Philadelphia, who were of the committee, confided to me the duty of drawing up the Report, which was presented to the Association at the New York meeting in May, 1853.

The paper, with the drawings, was ordered to be printed and engraved, and may be found in the last volume of the *Transactions*.

Under the impression that the views of disease and suggestions of treatment in this paper might, if more generally diffused, prove of some service to our professional brethren, I have, with the liberal consent and full approval of the publishing committee, made a separate volume of the Tract, which I beg you to allow me to dedicate, thus publicly, to you. I hope you will

accept it as a mark of my most sincere respect and warm attachment. I pray you also, as far as you properly may, overlook its numerous faults of substance and form; to receive my book with wonted kindness, and continue to favor me, as long as I live, with that course of kind and friendly conduct, which, together with my high appreciation of your sterling abilities and candor as a man, has long made me, and ever shall make me, feel that I ought to be, and am your sincere and respectful friend and most grateful servant,

CHARLES D. MEIGS.

324 WALNUT STREET,  
Jan. 15, 1854.

ON  
ACUTE AND CHRONIC DISEASES  
OF  
THE NECK OF THE UTERUS.

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THE great prevalence of cases of sexual disorders has of late called much of the attention of physicians to a consideration of the causes, signs, and treatment of those affections, and several recent publications have thrown much light on them. It was to be expected that the labors of ingenious men, devoted to this species of research, should, by this time, have placed all questions in this kind of practice so fairly before us, and with solutions of the various problems so clearly exposed, that there could be no farther real necessity for making public one's observations or reflections.

It is, nevertheless, undeniable that our daily clinical experience, as well as what we notice of the current medical literature, and what we behold around us among the sick, all concur to prove that it is in general

esteemed to be a difficult thing to comprehend the various disorders of the womb, and appreciate their peculiar reaction upon the constitutions of women.

Notwithstanding the numerous learned works we possess, whether they be of ancient date or modern, it does appear to me that this class of disorders, as to the clinical duties at least that are connected with them, are not so well understood as they ought to be, and that this is the chief reason why so many of the cases tend, at last, to fall under the care of a few individuals, who may have acquired a sort of fame or notoriety for success in their treatment, instead of remaining, as they ought, in charge of the family physician or surgeon, usually the first to be consulted on account of them.

I regard this tendency to specialization as a thing most injurious to the profession, which ought to be a whole in the whole and a whole in every part. Such specialization of the office of the physician is very far from tending to elevate the whole body in its usefulness to the public, however it may serve to exalt the interests of a few individuals, and it must be confessed that any specialization as to this sort of clinical duties is both highly inconvenient to the people, and disparaging to the profession at large, while it is wholly uncalled for by the nature of the cases. A little consideration might serve to convince us that this class of disorders presents to the practising physician nothing more essentially inscrutable, or intractable, than the ordinary complaints submitted for examination and advice to the gentlemen of the Art.



There would be less propensity to bring them into the class of a specialty in practice, if the treatises now in our possession, were as clear in the description and illustration of disease, and as precise in the indication and relation of methods, as they ought to be. Far from this—we have to regret that many of the drawings and colored prints serve rather to obscure, than enlighten the path of the practitioner. It needs only to glance, for example, at the plates to Madame Boivin's work, to see that this remark is quite just, while the more elegant volume of Dr. Hooper affords as little aid—his engravings, however beautiful, exhibiting for us only the ravages of diseases ended in death, and not those curable forms and stages, which are far more worthy of investigation, as guiding us in our attempts to cure.

It has seemed to the Author, that, before entering upon the examination and description of the special cases, he is called upon for a few remarks concerning methods of proceeding—the usefulness and propriety of which have, by some, been sharply called in question, while others have contended that they are indispensable to correct diagnosis and treatment.

I allude to the method introduced by M. Récamier, Physician to the Hôtel Dieu, at Paris. That celebrated professor, in his work entitled *Recherches sur le Traitement du Cancer*, 2 vols. 8vo. Paris, 1829, says, at page 317, t. i. :—

“Dès l'année 1801, consulté fréquemment pour des maladies organiques de l'utérus, je commençai à traiter

les ulcères du vagin et du museau de tanche de la même manière que ceux de la gorge, qui m'en donnèrent l'idée. Un tub d'étain du volume du doigt, et de quatre ou cinq pouces de long, servait à ces pansements, dans lesquels les surfaces ulcérées étoient touchées avec un pinceau de charpie trempé dans du miel rosat, ou dans du rob de Daucus, seul ou associé avec du collyre de Lanfranc, du laudanum de Rousseau, ou de l'extrait d'opium."

M. Récamier farther informs us, that, in 1812, M. Bayle inquired of him concerning his methods, and that the facts he communicated to that author were made public in the *Dict. des Sci. Méd.*, art. Cancer, which notice is found in tom. iii. p. 604, as follows:—

"Déjà M. Récamier est parvenu à porter différentes substances médicamenteuses immédiatement sur l'ulcère, à l'aide d'un pinceau conduit dans un tube de gomme élastique ou de métal qui écarte les parois du vagin, et embrasse dans son orifice supérieure toute la partie saillante du col de l'utérus. Ces essais, conduits avec prudence, conduiront peut-être un jour à quelque méthode de traitement, plus efficace que celles aux quelles nous sommes encore réduits."

The great success, in treatment, that attended M. Récamier's practice at the Hôtel Dieu and the city generally, led to the introduction of *his* method, which may be denominated the surgical method of curing the disorders of the cervix; and the question now is, whether the advantages resulting from it are sufficient to counterbalance certain evils supposed to have grown

out of its introduction. These evils, it is alleged, consist in the great mortification which any sensible woman must experience, if subjected to a metroscopic examination—some laxity of the moral sense likely to grow out of such proceedings—the physical injury, by contusion or laceration, sometimes attending the operation, and the mischievous effects of violent drugs and dangerous instruments, to the employment of which it leads and tempts us. Farther—it is asserted to be unnecessary, since the exploration by touching, as it is called, reveals sufficiently well the nature of diseases attacking the cervix uteri.

I shall not here discuss the moral differences between a diagnosis made by the operation of touching, and a metroscopic one. Either of them is bad enough, in itself considered; but as neither of them could be supposed possible, except out of some direful necessity of the patient, and as the one is not essentially more revolting to the feelings of the sufferer than the other, it appears to me that the argument is as valid against the one as the other. No one will deny that the delicacy of those relations that exist between medical people and their female patients, opposes, in a variety of cases, an insuperable barrier against any successful treatment whatever, for there are found individuals so fastidious as to prefer pain, disease, and even death itself, to any revelation concerning their disorders.

Some women, who do not object to relate the history of their diseased sensations, compel us to rest satisfied with such barren histories as they themselves can give,