

**A CLEAN SKIN: HOW TO GET IT  
AND HOW TO KEEP IT. SKIN  
DISEASES OF CONSTITUTIONAL  
ORIGIN: THEIR ETIOLOGY,  
PATHOLOGY, AND TREATMENT**

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A Clean Skin: How to Get It and How to Keep It. Skin Diseases of Constitutional Origin: Their Etiology, Pathology, and Treatment by John Wilkins Williams

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**JOHN WILKINS WILLIAMS**

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**SKIN DISEASES OF CONSTITUTIONAL ORIGIN:**

THEIR

**ETIOLOGY, PATHOLOGY, AND TREATMENT.**

BY

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## P R E F A C E.

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MY endeavour in this little book has been to produce a manual on Constitutional Skin Diseases, which, while embodying the matured results of my own experience, shall at the same time reflect the most recent Continental researches in this important class of maladies. A good book in this department of medical science has long been a *desideratum*. That there are three or four most able and elaborate treatises on skin diseases in the English language, I am the first to admit; but I feel sure that I merely re-echo a general complaint in asserting that their bulk detracts sadly from their usefulness, and that they are scarcely on a level with the most recent researches made in this department, especially by the French Dermatologists. These defects I have endeavoured to avoid in the present volume, which I hope will be found convenient in size, sound in practice, and well 'posted-up,' as our American cousins say, in each branch of the subject of which it treats.

Neither in form nor in matter does it assert any claim to originality. It is based almost wholly on the systems of the modern French school of Dermatologists. And here I must take the opportunity of acknowledging, once for all, my deep

obligations to these gentlemen, more especially to MM. Hardy, Bazin, Rollet, Diday, and Langlebert, whose valuable writings I have freely laid under contribution in compiling the present volume.

It only remains for me to state the grounds upon which I have thought fit to adopt the French in preference to the ordinary English system of classification,—that, namely, of Willan and Bateman.

English writers have for the most part classified these diseases according to the nature of the cutaneous lesion. They make an erythematous class, a papular, vesicular, pustular, &c., according as the skin affection manifests itself in the form of an erythema, a papule, vesicle, or pustule. In other words, they adopt as the basis of classification the outward and obvious character of an eruption. But these characters, it must not be forgotten, are merely accidental, and a classification so founded throws no light on the real or essential nature of a skin disease. Dealing merely with local and superficial manifestations, it loses sight of (or rather fails altogether to see) that recondite and subtle constitutional diathesis which lies at the bottom of the mischief, and which is the real enemy we have to grapple with.

Now the French system is the very reverse of all this. Attempting a higher generalization, it classifies skin diseases, not according to their obvious characters, but according to the constitutional diathesis in which they are supposed to originate. I say '*supposed to originate*' purposely, because the existence of two of these constitutional diatheses, viz. the Dartrous and



the Arthritic, is a questionable hypothesis rather than an undisputed fact. Still this does not detract from the value of their system of classification. Hypothesis, though it does not constitute knowledge, is an invaluable instrument in helping us to obtain it. If hypothesis is to be discarded in medical science, especially in so obscure a branch of it as Dermatology, we shall never advance a single step towards placing it on a more rational, less empirical basis. This is the reason why I lean towards the French school. I do not receive as established truth the speculations which it has advanced in Dermatology. I regard them, not as arrows shot home to the mark, but simply as arrows aimed in the right direction. How near they have reached their aim, further research will one day show. In the meantime it is quite certain that the French are probing deeper into the etiology of skin diseases than are our own Dermatologists; just as the man, who draws his bow even at a venture, stands a better chance of hitting the mark than he who lets his arrows lie idle in the quiver.

10 WIMPOLE STREET,

CAVENDISH SQUARE:

Nov. 1864.

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