

**CLINICAL LECTURES ON DISEASES  
OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM,  
DELIVERED AT THE NATIONAL  
HOSPITAL FOR THE PARALYSED  
AND EPILEPTIC, LONDON**

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**W. R. GOWERS**

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BY

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## PREFACE.

The following Lectures have been delivered at the National Hospital for the Paralysed and Epileptic. They are reprinted from various English medical journals, with the exception of two lectures, and for permission to reproduce them I am indebted to the J. B. Lippincott Company.

W. R. GOWERS.

*Queen Anne St., London,  
June, 1895.*



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CLINICAL LECTURES  
ON  
DISEASES OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

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LECTURE I.

SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE DIAGNOSIS  
OF DISEASES OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM.

*Gentlemen:*—If we look back over the progress of medical science, three epochs of discovery stand out in special salience, contrasting, in the steepness of the rise in knowledge they present, with the more gradual progress of other branches and of the same subjects at other times. These are, first, the revolution in the conception of diseases of the heart and circulation which Harvey's great discovery entailed; secondly, the penetrating extension of knowledge of all the thoracic diseases which was effected by the invention of the methods of auscultation and percussion, and the discoveries which followed that invention; and, thirdly, the enormous advance in our knowledge of the nervous system and its diseases which the last quarter of a century has witnessed. This has been largely due to the development of microscopical research, in some degree to

the progress of experiment, but very much to the extraordinary increase in the capacity for investigation which the general progress of science has produced, and to the fertile field presented by these diseases for the exercise of that faculty. The results of the application of the chemical and microscopical investigation to the urine, and the transforming revelations made through the invention of the ophthalmoscope and the laryngoscope, are hardly less remarkable, but their range is more limited than those of the progress effected during the three great epochs in discovery that I have mentioned. The last of these concerns us in a special manner, because it has taken place in our own time and is still in active progress. It is to certain consequences of it that I desire to direct your attention to-day—consequences that are of the utmost importance to the practitioner in his daily work. How great, how wide and profound, has been the change that our knowledge of diseases of the nervous system has undergone cannot, indeed, be realized by all members of our profession. A large number of those who studied before the change took place have been unable to follow the new development of knowledge,—the successive stages of which have followed each other with a rapidity almost bewildering, and the difficulty has been enhanced by the freedom with which investigators have revelled in a novel nomenclature, embracing alike the new and the old, in part essential, but in still larger measure superfluous. The exigencies of practice, with its increasing demand on the time and energy of the practitioner, and its unceasing echo of the cry (shall I say of a colleague's daughter?) "Give, give," has made it often impossible for him to attempt, or, attempting to continue, to follow the successive discoveries. Without a knowledge of their scientific features he has generally found it impracticable to use them, and so he has either rested content with that which he learned of old, or