

**ON THE CARBON THEORY OF
CONSUMPTION, AND ON THE
SUCCESSFUL TREATMENT OF
CONSUMPTION, BRONCHITIS, ASTHMA,
AND CATARRH, BY OXYGENATED AND
MEDICATED INHALATIONS**

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On the carbon theory of consumption, and on the successful treatment of consumption, bronchitis, asthma, and catarrh, by oxygenated and medicated inhalations by Robert Hunter

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ROBERT HUNTER

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*On the carbon theory of
consumption [&c.].*

Robert Hunter

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OXYGENATED AND MEDICATED INHALATIONS.

ILLUSTRATED BY INSTRUMENTS AND CASES.

BY
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(OF CANADA),



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Consumption; Carbon v. Oxygen; The Medical Acts Amend-
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INTRODUCTION.

As more than *one-third* of the people of this country fall a sacrifice to consumption and its cognates, to learn all that is known regarding their nature, causes, and treatment must be the natural desire of every person possessed of common humanity.

At present comparatively few have any correct ideas of the manner in which the most fatal diseases incident to our race are acquired, or what precautions are necessary to guard the health from their insidious approaches.

To popularise this knowledge, and bring it within the reach of all, is unquestionably the duty, and should be the aim, of the members of the medical profession. The Lord Chief Justice of England on a recent occasion wisely said—

“I would be the last man for a single moment to deprecate the idea of popularising knowledge upon such important matters, so far as they can be brought within the sphere of popular knowledge. I quite agree that if you can really make people sensible of what are the causes which lead to such a disease as consumption—if you can make them sensible of what are the symptoms against which they ought to be on their guard—if you can make them understand what

they ought to do with a view to prevent consumption, or what they ought to do when consumption has once been established, you are doing a vast amount of good to the mass of the community. In every branch of science, so far as you can make science a matter of popular knowledge, so much the better."

This is precisely what I aim at in the following pages, and I am the more pleased to know that the undertaking meets the approval of the highest judicial authority of the kingdom, because medical men, as a rule, look but coldly on these attempts to unveil the secret mysteries of the healing art, and are apt to misinterpret the motives of those who seek to enlighten the world concerning health.

My avoidance of technical terms, I fear, may be censured by some of my brethren as *unprofessional*, but this was unavoidable if my precepts were to be intelligible to non-medical readers. Even ripe scholars would hardly understand the technical jargon (composed of dead Latin and living Greek) in which we indulge while writing for the profession. On this subject the *Lancet* observes:—

"*Medicine has every reason to court the investigation of men of sense and education. They love to be appealed to in plain clear language. Mystery is only magnificent to the ignorant and uneducated. The best medical writers are remarkable for the clearness of their diction, and for the constant avoidance of Latinised terms This is useful for medical men writing for each other; it is most desirable when they are writing or speaking words which are to be scanned by non-medical persons.*"

It then being admitted that to write for the information of the general public is commendable in itself,

and that the subject of which this book treats is one of deep concern to all classes, I beg to submit a *true* exposition of my theory on the origin and nature of consumption.

To understand clearly the *causes* which produce a disease, and to base a correct *theory* upon such causes, are the first steps towards the adoption of proper means of prevention and treatment.

My book entitled "*Letters on the Lungs*" was published for the purpose of pointing out what I regarded as the real causes of consumption, and to recommend a more efficient treatment for the cure of this and its cognate diseases than the one in general use. I was influenced in its preparation by the frank admission of Sir James Clark that the existing mode of practice had proved utterly insufficient to arrest its progress or effect its cure:—

"The total inefficacy of all means hitherto adopted for diminishing the frequency, or reducing the mortality, of this class of diseases is of itself sufficient incitement to us to seek for some other method of remedying the evil." (Clark on *Pulmonary Consumption*, Preface, p. xi.)

The high reputation of Sir James Clark as an authority on this class of diseases, and his eminent rank in the profession as Physician in Ordinary to her Gracious Majesty, led me to attach great importance to his words, which, moreover, were confirmed by a more recent writer. Dr. Edward Smith, "Assistant Physician to the Hospital for Consumption and Diseases

of the Chest, Brompton," in a work published only two years before the date of my book of Letters, stated that—

"The general feeling of professional and non-professional people alike is that the disease [consumption] is a fatal one." (P. 29.)

And he concluded a general summary of the views of the profession, and the results of the cod-liver oil treatment, in the following words:—

"We are not agreed as to the essential nature of the disease, have no unfailing mode of treatment, and the disease is still essentially and almost as universally a fatal one as it has been in all ages." (P. 30.)

When to these admissions of the utter failure of the cod-liver oil practice we add the startling fact that since its introduction the *annual* deaths caused by diseases of the lungs in each million of the population have increased from 5,839 to 6,155½, there are surely reasons enough for desiring to discover a more rational and more successful mode of treatment.

Had the mortality from diseases of the lungs remained the same under the cod-liver oil treatment as before its introduction, the *yearly* deaths would be 6,298 less than they are at the present time! A practice which, instead of decreasing the deaths from the class of diseases it is supposed to cure, is followed by an *increased* sacrifice of more than SIX THOUSAND LIVES A YEAR; can hardly claim the confidence of mankind on the score of its utility.