

**A TREATISE ON THE
NATURE,
CAUSES, AND TREATMENT
OF ERYSIPELAS**

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A Treatise on the Nature, Causes, and Treatment of Erysipelas by Thomas Nunneley

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THOMAS NUNNELEY

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A TREATISE

ON

THE NATURE, CAUSES, AND TREATMENT

OF

ERYSIPELAS.

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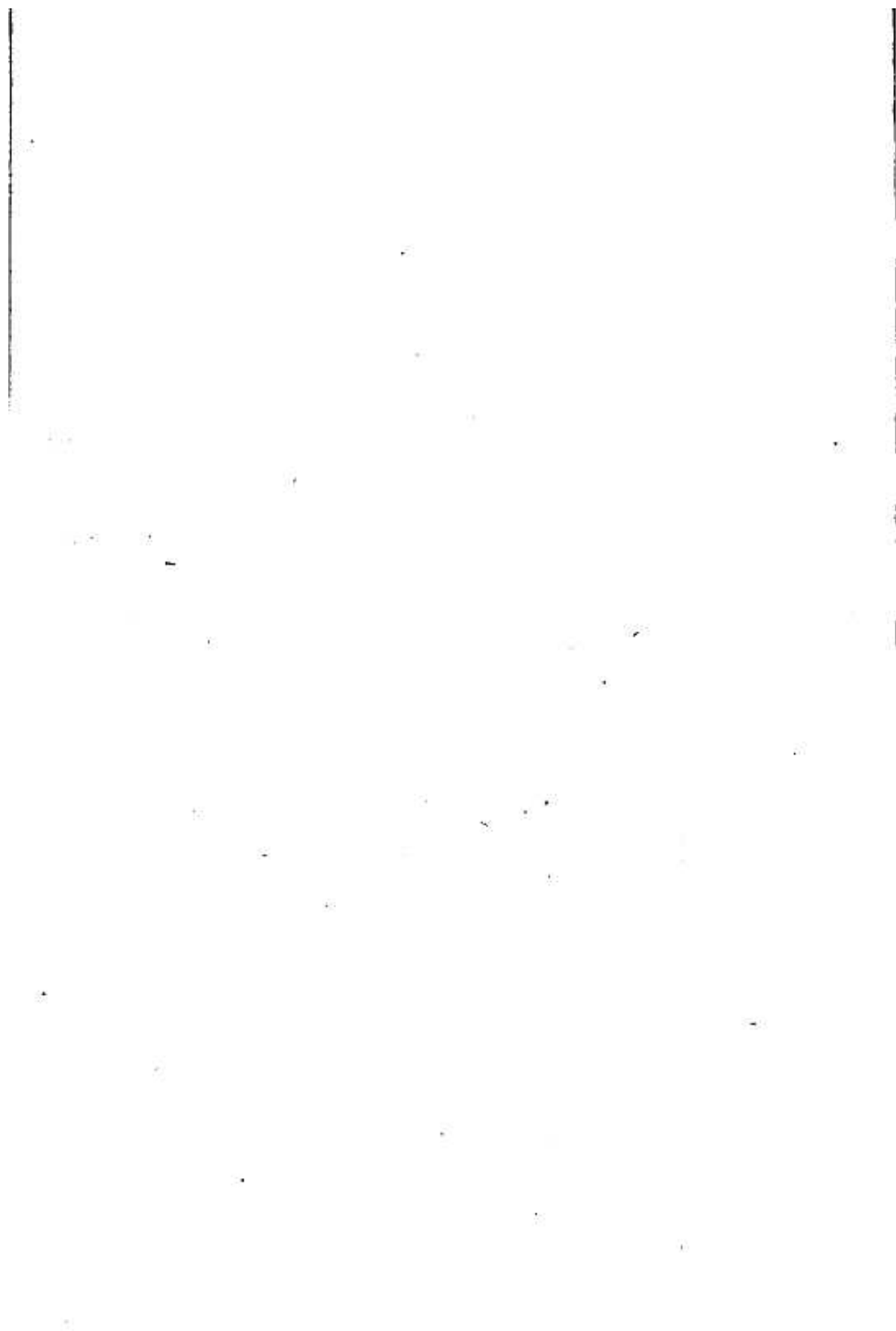
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1844.

ADVERTISEMENT.

ADDITIONAL matter on the subject of Epidemic Erysipelas, as this disease has recently shown itself in New England and in the State of Indiana, is introduced into this first American Edition of Dr. Nunneley's Treatise. The facts thus revealed will be found to be important, in relation to the connection between erysipelalous inflammation of the skin and that of the serous and mucous membranes, and, also, between erysipelas and puerperal peritonitis.



P R E F A C E.

THROUGHOUT the following pages, to the word Erysipelas a more extended signification is attached than frequently is assigned to it. Instead of being restricted to an affection of the skin alone, or even of the skin and subcutaneous cellular membrane, it is rather used as a divisional term, comprising several species. By some, this may be thought too vague and indefinite; perhaps it may be so, but the Author hopes that his meaning will be sufficiently apparent; and as he is by no means wedded to the expression thus employed, or thinks it faultless, when a better is suggested he will be happy to adopt it. No one can be more impressed than himself with the propriety and advantage of accurately defining terms, and constantly using them as defined; this being observed, the exact signification attached to a word is not likely to give rise to confusion and obscurity. What he wishes is, to show that many complaints which have received distinct names, and the effects of which are principally manifested in different tissues, are, in reality, of the same nature, and, consequently, are but modifications of each other. The word phlegmon has for long been generally employed as applicable to inflammations of various textures; and, in the same manner, the word erysipelas is now employed, as indicating a contrary condition or type, from phlegmon. If the term phlegmonous inflammation be allowed, he sees no reason why that of erysipelatous should not also be permitted. Indeed, it has already, by more than one writer, been so employed.

Numerous quotations and references will be found; others might have been added, especially from foreign authors, but just now some of the works were not within his reach, and he has not felt justified in introducing many second-hand extracts, particularly as he thinks the authorities he has referred to are sufficiently numerous and respectable to render the omission of less importance; indeed, his fear is, lest it be thought that he has erred by introducing too many quotations. This, however, has not been done for the purpose of swelling the size of the volume; or to bear down conviction by the mere force of names, but in points which are still so much disputed, and where equally good authorities are decidedly opposed to each other, testimony to facts is of the utmost importance. This is especially the case with subjects like the

present, where, from the many circumstances which are liable to escape observation, but which may, nevertheless, exercise much influence, it is well to bring evidence from distant and unconnected sources, in order that if there be error on the part of one observer, it may be corrected by another; for, if the facts upon which our deductions rest are not valid, however good and legitimate the inferences in themselves may be, they must necessarily be valueless. Even when the evidence relates rather to opinions than strictly to facts, as, for instance, to the effects of some particular modes of treatment, the statements of those who differ ought to be carefully weighed, as by so doing, we shall often be enabled to arrive at a more accurate conclusion, not only upon the disputed point, but also upon the nature and treatment of the complaint.

If decided opinions are expressed as to the intimate connection and relationship between the several affections mentioned, and that in nature they are the same as that spreading inflammation of the dermis, which is commonly denominated erysipelas, the Author hopes the facts and arguments advanced in support of such opinions, will be thought, if not as convincing to others as to himself, at least sufficient to prevent the charge of advancing an unsupported hypothesis. It cannot be denied, that enough has been produced to show the manifest inconsistency and incorrectness of many of the prevalent opinions regarding the nature of erysipelas, as well as the contradictory and opposite treatment so confidently recommended for the cure of even the more ordinary forms of the complaint.

About ten years since, the first of two prizes which had been offered for Essays on Erysipelas and Vaccination, the best essay on either subject to receive the first prize, by a Society with which the Author was then connected, was awarded to a short dissertation on erysipelas sent in by him. Many of the statements and opinions which are contained in the present treatise, are founded upon what was then advanced, and may be regarded as an amplification and extension of the views then brought forward. At that time he was urged by several of his friends to publish the essay, and although he thought it better to wait until time and experience had enabled him more maturely to consider the subject, and to see if what he has regarded as a deficiency in the Medical Literature of the day, viz., a separate treatise in this important disease, would not be filled up by an abler hand, the intention was not entirely abandoned, when, last year, circumstances arose which induced him to put his observations into the form in which they are now presented to the Profession.

Leeds, September, 1841.

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