

THE MEDICAL BOOKS OF DR. CHARLES N. HEWITT¹

The mind of medicine is illustrated in its literature, written and printed. — SIR WILLIAM OSLER

PART OF THE EQUIPMENT of most professional men is the books they own in their respective fields. Where records are obtainable, a private technical library may furnish the historian with many valuable facts concerning his subject. An example of such a library is the collection of important medical books assembled by Dr. Charles Nathaniel Hewitt of Red Wing. This collection and that of Dr. William Worrall Mayo form the nucleus of the present library of the Mayo Clinic and Mayo Foundation of Rochester.² Dr. Hewitt's books, now scattered throughout the library, were identified only after a careful scrutiny of accessions records and a personal examination of some ten thousand textbooks on its shelves. Since Dr. Hewitt's autograph appears on the title pages of most of his books, their identity was readily established. Nevertheless, some books originally belonging to this collection may have been overlooked.

Dr. Hewitt, who is described by Dr. William W. Folwell as Minnesota's "Apostle of Public Health," was born in Vergennes, Vermont, on June 3, 1836.³ He received his preliminary education at Cheshire Academy in Connecticut and his academic training at Hobart College in Geneva, New York. After deciding to become a physician, Hewitt began

¹The author is indebted to Dr. Louis B. Wilson, director emeritus of the Mayo Foundation, for much helpful advice in the preparation of this paper.

²An abstract of a paper by Thomas E. Keys on "The Medical Books of William Worrall Mayo, Pioneer Surgeon of the American Northwest" appears, with Dr. William J. Mayo's discussion, in the Mayo Clinic and Mayo Foundation, *Collected Papers*, 30:938-943, 946-950 (Philadelphia, 1939).

³Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 4:413-425 (St. Paul, 1930).

the study of medicine at Albany Medical College in New York. He was graduated in 1857, when he received the degrees both of master of arts and doctor of medicine. He was valedictorian of his class in the medical school, and a year previous to graduation he served as demonstrator of anatomy at Geneva Medical College.

After his graduation, Hewitt began the practice of medicine in Geneva, New York. He remained there until 1861. At the outbreak of the Civil War, he entered the United States Army with the rank of assistant surgeon. He served for a year as surgeon of the Fiftieth New York Volunteer Engineers, was surgeon in chief of a brigade for two years, and received the brevet rank of lieutenant colonel for his outstanding service in the Civil War. Dr. Jonathan Letterman, who was General Joseph Hooker's medical director, described Hewitt as the "best regimental surgeon in the Army of the Potomac."⁴

After the war Hewitt, who for some time had desired to practice medicine in Minnesota, found an opportunity to acquire an established practice in Red Wing. There in 1866 he began the well-esteemed work of a country practitioner, and in the same year he was married to Miss Helen Hawley, daughter of Dr. J. E. Hawley of Ithaca, New York. Hawley was professor of surgery in Geneva Medical College.

In 1869 Massachusetts became the first state to create a board of health, and in 1871 California followed the example set by Massachusetts. Hewitt probably followed these developments with much interest, for during the Civil War he had seen at firsthand evidence of the importance of preventive medicine and sanitation in the welfare of a community. He decided that Minnesota also should have a state board of health, and he began work on a legislative bill patterned after the Massachusetts law. Through the influence of Gov-

⁴Quoted in Folwell, *Minnesota*, 4:414. See also William B. Atkinson, *Physicians and Surgeons of the United States*, 566 (Philadelphia, 1878).

ernor Horace Austin and the support of the American Medical Association and the Minnesota State Medical Society, the bill was passed with little opposition on March 4, 1872. Thus, in the third decade of its existence, Minnesota, with a population of about 450,000, became the third state in the Union to have a department of public health.

From the organization of the Minnesota state board of health in 1872 until 1897, Hewitt was its executive secretary. Under his able guidance town boards of health were established, and thus a means was created for firsthand observation of the communicable diseases. Hewitt made public health the important work of his life, to the neglect of his private practice. Among its activities, the state board of health conducted a campaign of propaganda directed at inculcating upon the people an understanding and appreciation of the value of public health and sanitation. Hewitt made many addresses on behalf of his board before schools, teachers' institutes, colleges, seminaries, and church conferences. He prepared many papers and "circulars of instruction" on the subject of the prevention of communicable diseases. In 1879 he inaugurated a system of interstate notification. This was later expanded into an international system of notification and quarantine. In 1885 he inaugurated the publication of a monthly periodical, *Public Health in Minnesota*, which was continued until 1895. Free copies were sent to local boards of health and township clerks. In 1890 the circulation of this journal was thirty-seven hundred copies.

In 1874 Hewitt was appointed nonresident professor of public health in the University of Minnesota. This may have been the first appointment of its kind in the United States. For twenty-eight years, Hewitt held this position, giving a yearly course of lectures on public health.⁵ It was through his influence that the board of regents in 1877 or-

⁵ Folwell, *Minnesota*, 4:421.

LA RAGE

*Hewitt
Paris
Apr 15/90*

**Contenant la collection complète
des communications de M. Pasteur sur ce sujet,
avec un court résumé historique de la question,
la technique, et les résultats statistiques et autres
de la nouvelle méthode de prophylaxie :
suivie de quelques courtes considérations générales.**

PAR

Le Dr JEAN-RENAUD SUZOR

DOCTEUR EN MÉDECINE DE LA FACULTÉ DE PARIS

Lauréat du Collège Royal de l'île Maurice

M. B. : C. M. : L. M., de l'Université d'Edimbourg

Bachelier en médecine, Maître en chirurgie, Licencié en Accouchements

Délégué par le Gouvernement de l'île Maurice pour étudier à Paris

la méthode de prophylaxie de la rage après morsure



PARIS

IMPRIMERIE DES ÉCOLES

HENRI JOUVE

23, Rue Racine, 23

1887

THE TITLE PAGE OF HEWITT'S COPY OF SUZOR'S "LA RAGE"

dered the yearly physical examination of all students in the University of Minnesota. His contacts with the university led to even more important developments. Ten years after his appointment to the post of professor of public health, he drew up a plan for the organization of a college of medicine and surgery which was to function as an examining board. The regents reacted favorably to this plan, the president of the university reduced the scheme to statutory form, and it was adopted on January 5, 1883. In the same year the state legislature passed an act requiring all practitioners of medicine and surgery to be licensed by the faculty of the college. In 1888, with the founding of the medical school of the University of Minnesota, the college was disbanded.

Hewitt went to Europe in 1889 to study bacteriology. He met Pasteur and spent part of his time working on rabies in Pasteur's laboratory, as a note on the flyleaf of his copy of Jean-Renaud Suzor's *La Rage* (Paris, 1887) reveals.⁶ Hewitt took back with him to his Red Wing laboratory a Koch sterilizer and other equipment and set up the first bacteriologic laboratory west of the Allegheny Mountains concerned with the study of human infections. He sent for Dr. Theobald Smith, the prominent bacteriologist, to install the incubator and sterilizer. In 1893 Hewitt transferred his laboratory to the old Mechanic Arts Building on the campus of the University of Minnesota.⁷

In 1890 Hewitt established a vaccine station on a farm near his home at Red Wing. It supplied vaccine for the prevention of smallpox without cost to health officers, local boards of health, and physicians in Minnesota. The pro-

⁶ Hewitt's note reads: "Bought and used while at work in Pasteur's Laboratory on Rabies in 1889-90. Attached to the back of the volume are the schemes for the use of the spinal cord emulsions. 2nd by Viola. Pasteur's preparation. 1st by M. L. Teidris, Secretary of the Institute for Anti-rabies inoculation. C. N. H."

⁷ Thomas B. Magath, "The History of Steam Sterilization," in *Annals of Medical History*, 9:341 (July, 1937); Louis B. Wilson, "The Development of Public Health Medicine in Minnesota," in Staff Meetings of the Mayo Clinic, *Proceedings*, 12:779 (December 8, 1937).

ceeds from the sale of vaccine outside the state almost made the laboratory self-supporting. In 1890 Hewitt again visited Europe. He spent six weeks in England studying English methods of vaccination and methods for the prevention of diphtheria. He also spent six weeks in Paris, where he went to study rabies.

Although Hewitt is primarily remembered for his contributions to public health, he was much interested in surgery, especially gynecologic surgery, for he realized the value of healthy women in the pioneer communities. Before 1878, he had operated for tumors of the ovary three times, twice successfully.⁸ This was a difficult operation to perform successfully before the adoption of Lister's antiseptic surgical principles. Many surgeons achieved such poor results that they refused to operate for this condition. Hewitt's experiences in the Civil War led him to modify the starch bandage so as to adapt it better to civil and military use.

Hewitt was president of the American Public Health Association in 1888. His reputation gained international significance with his election to the Society of Health Officers in England and to the Société d'Hygiène of France. He held his office as executive secretary of the Minnesota state board of health for twenty-five years, but on January 11, 1897, he learned that his term of service had expired and that he had not been reappointed. He then resumed the private practice of medicine in Red Wing, where he continued to treat patients for several years. He died at the age of seventy-four on July 10, 1910, at the home of his daughter in Summit, New Jersey.

Represented in Hewitt's collection of medical books are some of the great figures in medical history. The entire collection, from the standpoint of selection alone, reflects a keen insight into the knowledge of medical advances achieved in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The general works on medicine will be mentioned first.

⁸ Atkinson, *Physicians and Surgeons*, 566.

The *Memoirs of John Abernathy* (New York, 1853) is one of the outstanding volumes that Hewitt owned. Abernathy believed that local diseases either were of a constitutional nature or were referable to digestive disturbances. Sir Richard Thorne presented Dr. Hewitt with an autographed copy of his *On the Progress of Preventive Medicine during the Victorian Era* (London, 1888). This work was an inaugural address delivered before the Epidemiological Society of London during the session of 1887-88. Hewitt attended the meeting and no doubt there became acquainted with Sir Richard, who at that time was assistant medical officer to Her Majesty's local government board.

One of the choice volumes of the Hewitt collection is Benjamin Rush's *Essays, Literary, Moral and Philosophical* (Philadelphia, 1806). Rush, best remembered as a signer of the Declaration of Independence, was, according to one authority, the "ablest American clinician of his time."⁹ He regarded inflammation as the effect, rather than the cause, of disease, but in his medical practice he placed great value on bloodletting and the extraction of infected teeth in the cure of disease.

At one time Hewitt was the owner of Hermann Boerhaave's *Aphorisms concerning the Knowledge and Cure of Diseases* (London, 1742).¹⁰ Boerhaave was, beyond a doubt, the best-known consultant of his time. The *Aphorisms* were first published in Leyden in 1709. They were translated not only into the Romance languages, but also into Arabic. One of the outstanding works of Hewitt's library is the *Seats and Causes of Diseases Investigated by Anatomy* (London, 1769) in three volumes, by John Baptist Morgagni. The first edition of this work, which was published in 1761, constitutes the true foundation of modern patho-

⁹ Fielding H. Garrison, *An Introduction to the History of Medicine*, 379 (Philadelphia, 1929).

¹⁰ A few books mentioned herein are now unfortunately missing from the Hewitt collection. Library records, however, show that these books were once the property of Dr. Hewitt.

logic anatomy, for Morgagni made many original pathologic observations besides describing all the diseases known in his time.¹¹

Some of Hewitt's books had been owned by his father, Dr. Henry Hewitt. Among these may be mentioned *A System of Phrenology* (Boston, 1834) by George Combe, a Scotch phrenologist. Hewitt made this revealing comment on the title page of the book, "From the library of my father. His favorite book on the subject which was much discussed about the forties."

Hewitt owned two interesting books on anatomy: the first American edition of Jean Cruveilhier's *Anatomy of the Human Body*, edited by Granville Sharp Pattison (New York, 1844), and Casper Wistar's two-volume *System of Anatomy for the Use of Students of Medicine*, with additions by William Edmonds Horner (Philadelphia, 1827). Wistar taught anatomy in the University of Pennsylvania from 1791 until his death in 1818. His *System of Anatomy*, first published between 1811 and 1814, was the first book on the subject to be published in the United States.

Two works by William Benjamin Carpenter, who was not only a famous English naturalist but Fullerian professor of physiology at the Royal Institution, are among Hewitt's books. These works, *The Microscope* (Philadelphia, 1856) and the *Principles of Human Physiology* (Philadelphia, 1885), have definite historical value. Another work interesting to those concerned with medical history is John Brown's *Elements of Medicine* (Fairhaven, Massachusetts, 1797). Brown believed that life itself was nonexistent except as a result of the action of external stimuli on an organized body. Diseases, he concluded logically, were "sthenic" (active) or "asthenic" (weak) according to "excitability" of the tissues. Absurd as were Brown's ideas, they held the

¹¹ This work appeared originally in two volumes under the title *De sedibus et causis morborum per anatomen indagatis libri quinque* (Venice, 1761).

attention of Europe for more than a quarter of a century.¹² A far more valuable work which Hewitt owned is William Heberden's *Commentaries on the History and Cure of Diseases* (London, 1802). Dr. Samuel Johnson, who was one of his patients, called Heberden the "last of our great physicians."¹³ He was considered one of the best Greek and Hebrew scholars of his time, and his *Commentaries* were originally written in Latin. The result of a lifetime of conscientious note-taking, they were intended to be a guide for his son to follow in the practice of medicine.

Hewitt's interest in the field of public health is evidenced by several important books on communicable diseases. He owned, for example, Charles B. Coventry's *Epidemic Cholera* (Buffalo, 1849), Horatio G. Jameson's *Treatise on Epidemic Cholera* (Philadelphia, 1855), and John M. Woodworth's *Cholera Epidemic of 1873 in the United States* (Washington, 1875). Other important works relating to public health in this collection are Henry H. Porter's *Account of the Origin, Symptoms, and Cure of the Influenza, or Epidemic Catarrh* (Philadelphia, 1831); G. Armauer Hansen and Carl Looft's *Leprosy: In Its Clinical and Pathological Aspects*, translated by Norman Walker (Bristol, England, 1895); Austin Flint's *Clinical Report of Dysentery* (Buffalo, 1853); Suzor's *La Rage*, to which reference has been made; a presentation copy of Sir John Simon's *English Sanitary Institutions* (London, 1890); *Denmark; Its Medical Organization, Hygiene, and Demography* (Copenhagen, 1891), a volume presented to Dr. Hewitt at the meeting of the International Congress of Hygiene and Demography at London in August, 1891; and the second edition of J. G. A. Lugol's *Researches on Scrofulous Diseases*, translated by A. Sidney Doane, with an "Essay and Formulae on the Treatment of Scrofula" (New

¹² Garrison, *History of Medicine*, 314.

¹³ John Nichols quotes Johnson in James Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson*, 2: 1013 (Bath, 1925).

Charles A. Hewitt
November 21st
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EXPERIMENTS

AND

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

GASTRIC JUICE,

AND THE

PHYSIOLOGY OF DIGESTION.

BY WILLIAM BEAUMONT, M. D.

Surgeon in the U. S. Army.

PLATTSBURGH,

PRINTED BY F. P. ALLEN.

1833.

THE TITLE PAGE OF HEWITT'S COPY OF THE FIRST
EDITION OF BEAUMONT'S "EXPERIMENTS"

York, 1847). Mention should be made also of Fracastorius' well-known poem *Syphilis, sive morbus gallicus*, edited by Ludwig Choulant (Leipzig, 1830), now, unfortunately, missing from the Hewitt collection. One of the authors of the volume on *Leprosy*, Hansen, who was inspector general of leprosy in Norway, discovered the *Mycobacterium leprae*, supposedly the causative organism of leprosy, in the years between 1871 and 1874. Hewitt's copy of his work, according to a note on the flyleaf, was "Presented with the Publisher's compliments by request of the author," and was "acknowledged July 8, 1896 by letter to Hansen." Sir John Simon, another author represented in this group of books, exerted great influence in England on the encouragement of legislation relating to public hygiene. How Dr. Hewitt acquired his work is revealed by a note on the flyleaf: "Charles N. Hewitt from Author, Aug. 1891." Lugol is remembered chiefly for his use of iodine in the treatment of scrofula.

An important volume owned by Hewitt is the first edition of William Beaumont's *Experiments and Observations on the Gastric Juice, and the Physiology of Digestion* (Plattsburgh, 1833). Hewitt also owned the second edition of this remarkable work, which had been corrected by Dr. Samuel Beaumont, a cousin of the author (Burlington, Vermont, 1847). Dr. William Beaumont was an army surgeon who did much of the research that resulted in his famous book while stationed at Fort Crawford, Wisconsin. His experiments are so well known that they need not be elaborated on here. It should be mentioned, however, that he proved that the gastric juice is secreted only when food is present in the stomach. Two other works relating to disease of the stomach were owned by Hewitt. They are Marshall Hall's *Descriptive, Diagnostic and Practical Essay on Disorders of the Digestive Organs and General Health* (Keene, New Hampshire, 1823), and John Abercromie's *Pathological and Practical Researches on Disease of the*

Stomach, the Intestinal Canal, the Liver and Other Viscera of the Abdomen (Philadelphia, 1845). The book by Hall originally belonged to the elder Dr. Hewitt.

James Copland is represented among Hewitt's books by *Of the Nature and Treatment of Palsy and Apoplexy* (Philadelphia, 1850). Copland made his living by hack writing and his work is not of much importance in medical bibliography.¹⁴ Hewitt's interest in neurologic and psychiatric problems is reflected in his ownership of George T. Ladd's *Primer of Psychology* (New York, 1894); George Burrows' *On Disorders of the Cerebral Circulation and on the Connection between Affectations of the Brain and Diseases of the Heart* (Philadelphia, 1848); and John Haslam's *Observations on Madness and Melancholy* (London, 1809). On the title page of the latter work, Haslam had printed the apt statement from Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*: "Of the uncertainties of our present state, the most dreadful and alarming is the uncertain continuance of reason."

Mention has been made of some of Hewitt's accomplishments in the field of surgery. It should be emphasized that pioneer physicians often were called upon to treat patients surgically. Physicians in pioneer communities, especially, were expected not only to practice "the art" of medicine, but to perform surgical operations on short notice. Accidents were common occurrences in frontier life. To guide Dr. Hewitt in his practice of surgery, he had many outstanding books. Included among the general works were Samuel D. Gross's two-volume *System of Surgery* (Philadelphia, 1866), and William Pirrie's *Principles and Practice of Surgery* (Philadelphia, 1852). Gross was the greatest American surgeon of his time.¹⁵ He invented many new instruments and made several original experiments. An important work on military surgery that Hewitt owned was

¹⁴ Garrison, *History of Medicine*, 425.

¹⁵ Garrison, *History of Medicine*, 599.

G. B. MacLeod's *Notes on the Surgery of the War in the Crimea, with Remarks on the Treatment of Gunshot Wounds* (Philadelphia, 1862).

Hewitt owned the following works in the field of surgical specialties: William H. Van Buren's *Lectures on Diseases of the Rectum* (New York, 1870), Heber Chase's *Final Report of the Committee of the Philadelphia Medical Society on the Radical Cure of Hernia* (Philadelphia, 1837), Edward Stanley's *Treatise on Diseases of the Bones* (Philadelphia, 1849), Samuel Hare's *Practical Observations on the Causes and Treatment of Curvatures of the Spine* (London, 1838), W. T. Ward's *Practical Observations on Distortions of the Spine* (London, 1822), and Horace Green's *On the Surgical Treatment of Polypi of the Larynx and Oedema of the Glottis* (New York, 1852). Among the authors of these works, Green and Van Buren were outstanding. Green was a pioneer in the field of laryngology in the United States. He was the first to treat diseases of the throat by local applications of medicaments (1838), and the first to describe cystic and malignant laryngeal growths (1851, 1852).¹⁶ Van Buren was a prominent surgeon of his day. He settled in New York, where he became prosector to Valentine Mott, the great pioneer in surgery of the vascular system.

Hewitt once owned Sir James Paget's *Lectures on Surgical Pathology* (Philadelphia, 1871), but unfortunately it is now missing from the collection. Sir James Paget, one of the greatest surgical pathologists of his time, achieved lasting distinction by his original description of eczema of the nipple with subsequent development of mammary cancer (1874) and his description of *osteitis deformans* (1877-82). Hewitt's interest in diseases of women has been mentioned. His library contained the following important works in that field: Thomas A. Emmet's *Principles and*

¹⁶ Francis R. Packard, *History of Medicine in the United States*, 2:1151 (New York, 1931).

Practice of Gynaecology (Philadelphia, 1879); Charles West's *Lectures on the Diseases of Women* (Philadelphia, 1858); Louis G. Richelot's *Chirurgie de l'utérus, du vagin et de la vulve* (Paris, 1902); Pierre Cazeaux's *Theoretical and Practical Treatise on Midwifery*, translated by Robert D. Thomas (Philadelphia, 1850); and F. Du Parquet's *Treatise on the Functional and Organic Diseases of the Uterus*, translated with notes by Joseph Warrington (Philadelphia, 1837).

The comparatively recently renewed interest in the medicinal values of cod-liver oil may be traced back to much earlier times. Hewitt owned a work on this subject by L. J. de Jongh, which was translated by Edward Carey and published under the title *The Three Kinds of Cod Liver Oil; Comparatively Considered with References to Their Chemical and Therapeutic Properties* (Philadelphia, 1849).

Hewitt seemed to have the ability to select for his library the important works of outstanding men in the various medical fields, as is manifested by his books on dermatology. He owned three such works: Robert Willan's treatise *On Cutaneous Diseases* (London, 1808), Pierre François-Olive Rayer's *Theoretical and Practical Treatise on the Diseases of the Skin, from the Second Addition, with Notes and Other Additions by John Bell* (Philadelphia, 1845), and J. M. Neligan's *Atlas of Cutaneous Diseases* (Philadelphia, 1856). Willan, a Yorkshire Quaker, is considered the first of the modern dermatologists. He classified cutaneous diseases according to their objective appearance. The work of Rayer represents further advance in the understanding of dermatologic problems, for he classified cutaneous diseases according to their pathologic manifestations. His work is extensively illustrated with beautifully colored plates, as is also the volume by Neligan.

Other works in Hewitt's library deal with miscellaneous subjects; a few are mentioned to illustrate their wide divergence in subject matter. For example, he owned Jonathan

Letterman's *Medical Recollections of the Army of the Potomac* (New York, 1866). The author, an army surgeon, revived Larrey's method of rapid evacuation of wounded men and reorganized medical service in the combat zone. Dr. Letterman's high regard for Hewitt's abilities as a surgeon has been mentioned. Among other interesting works in Hewitt's library are Michael Ryan's *Manual of Medical Jurisprudence* (Philadelphia, 1832), John P. Nichol's *Cyclopædia of the Physical Sciences, Comprising Acoustics, Astronomy, Dynamics, Electricity, Heat* (London, 1860), and Karl R. Fresenius' *Manual of Qualitative Chemical Analysis* (New York, 1864).

It is apparent that the pioneer of Minnesota medicine who assembled this important medical library owned some of the best medical works of his day.¹⁷ Probably few frontier physicians had access to such books as were contained in Dr. Hewitt's library. His memory has been forcefully graded in the annals of Minnesota medical history. It is believed that Dr. Hewitt's medical books form a collection that is in itself an example of the acute vision of the first executive secretary of the Minnesota state board of health and the leader in many ways of the development of high professional standards among physicians in Minnesota.

THOMAS E. KEYS

MAYO CLINIC LIBRARY
ROCHESTER, MINNESOTA

¹⁷ The following works in the Hewitt collection are not discussed in the text: John Burdon-Sanderson, *Handbook for the Physiological Laboratory* (2 vols. Philadelphia, 1873); Austin Flint, *Clinical Report on Chronic Pleurisy* (Buffalo, 1853); J. M. Galt, *Practical Medicine* (Philadelphia, 1843); L. A. Levy and H. G. Willis, *Radium and Other Radio-active Elements* (London, 1904); *Regulations for the Duties of Inspectors-general and Deputy Inspectors-general of Hospitals* (London, 1858); T. Ribot, *Heredity; A Psychological Study of Its Phenomena, Laws, Causes, and Consequences* (New York, 1875); G. R. Rowe, *Practical Observations on Those Nervous Diseases Originating from Morbid Derangement of the Liver, Stomach, Etc., and Occasioning Low Spirits and Indigestion* (London, 1842); James Rush, *Philosophy of the Human Voice* (Philadelphia, 1833); and James Thacher, *American Modern Practice* (Boston, 1817) and *American New Dispensatory* (Boston, 1821).



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