

DERMATOLOGY AT GUY'S HOSPITAL (1850-1949).

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1850 - 1860.

The first appointment in dermatology to be made at Guy's Hospital was that of *Thomas Addison* (1793-1860) who in 1850 became Demonstrator of Cutaneous Diseases in the Medical School. At some later period the title became Physician for Diseases of the Skin. Addison retained this post until his retirement from the Hospital in 1860, sharing its duties from 1855 onwards with W. W. Gull.

The foundations for a Department of Dermatology were, however, laid earlier. Addison came to London in 1815 having graduated M.D. at Edinburgh, to become first a pupil of Thomas Bateman and later Physician at the Public Dispensary in Carey Street where Willan had done most of his work. In 1820 he entered Guy's Hospital as a pupil and in 1824, against vigorous opposition in the Court of Committees, he was appointed Lecturer and Assistant Physician through the powerful support of Benjamin Harrison, the great Treasurer who ruled over Guy's Hospital for more than 50 years.

During the same period Joseph Towne, a youth of 17 from Royston, presented himself one day to Astley Cooper with a little model of the human skeleton which he had just completed. Deeply impressed with the beauty and accuracy of the work, Astley Cooper strongly recommended his services to the Treasurer and thenceforward Towne served the Hospital as modeller continuously for the next 50 years, now and again giving some time to sculpture with success. He made 200 anatomical models, over 250 of pathological specimens and 560 of skin diseases. Most of the dermatological models were of cases in the wards selected by Addison though quite a number were added after Addison's time.

Addison was finally accepted at Guy's as a result of his researches. These, and his reputation as a magnificent and deeply admired teacher of students, contributed

more than anything else to the great fame of Guy's in its early days as an independent medical school.* He outshone even his great contemporaries, Bright and Hodgkin, but recognition in the country generally came late to Addison. He was painfully sensitive, hyperconscientious and depressive, and he sought no notice. The French, however, knew him well, and it was Trousseau who gave the name of *maladie d'Addison* to the disease, describing Addison as "*Le Doyen des professeurs du Guy's Hospital a Londres, et depuis longtemps connu parmi nous par les travaux dont il a enrichi la Science*".

(* It is known that Guy's Hospital was taking pupils in 1760, 35 years after its completion. By 1769 the new school and that of the ancient and illustrious Hospital of St. Thomas across the road had agreed to pool their teaching resources. St. Thomas's allotted to itself the Subjects of Anatomy and Surgery, leaving to Guy's "Physic" for which there was very little popular demand at the time. The hospitals became known thenceforth as the United Hospitals of the Borough. The termination of an uneasy partnership was precipitated in 1825 by a violent quarrel over the appointment of a successor to Astley Cooper, a Guy's man who held the lectureship in Anatomy and Surgery. Astley Cooper nominated his nephew, Bransby Cooper, a much liked character but by no means as able as his uncle and Harrison supported him. The Grand committee of St. Thomas's responded by appointing a surgeon of their own, Mr. South. Total separation was now inevitable and Guy's under the leadership of Harrison hurriedly built an anatomical department of its own. An enduring offspring of the union exists in the shape of a dining club known as the "United Boro Hospitals Club."

Addison's written works, collected and edited by Wilks and Daldy and published in 1867 in a single volume of the New Sydenham Society's *Proceedings* (Vol. 36), contain two original contributions to dermatology. One, in which he was associated with Gull, is a first description of xanthoma which they named vitiligoidea; the other *On True Keloid*, known for a while as keloid of Addison, was an account of what later became known as morphea. He drew attention to the difference between this and the cheloide of Alibert, which is the keloid of modern

terminology. The models of the cases are among the collection in the Gordon Museum at Guy's. *Melasma suprarenale* is also depicted in half-a-dozen models with accompanying histories.

1855 - 1863.

William Withey Gull (1816-1890) was a country boy living on the Guy's estate in whom, on his periodical visits, Harrison had detected unusual ability. Harrison put Gull to school in Bermondsey and in due course entered him as a pupil at Guy's. He was as brilliant as Harrison had thought and he was duly elected to the Staff at the age of 35, late for those days. In the meanwhile, Harrison had seen to it that he was provided with minor paid appointments which enabled him both to gain experience and to live. This arrangement appears to have been the forerunner of the appointment of Registrar of subsequent times, and the post of "registrar" for specially able senior students was indeed instituted at Guy's during that period. According to Cameron a whole series of subsequent reforms leading to the institution of posts of gradually increasing responsibility for senior students were carried out by Harrison, largely at the instigation of Gull. Gull wrote a large number of papers for the *Guy's Hospital Reports*, of which one entitled *On a Cretinoid State supervening in Adult Women* is said to be the first description of myxoedema. Though he found little to write about on dermatology, Pye-Smith later refers to him as a teacher of authority on this subject. He was one of the great Victorian physicians. Awarded a Baronetcy in 1872, he made a fortune.

1863 - 1866.

Samuel Osborne Habershon (1825-1889) wrote very little, but during his short period of office as Demonstrator of Cutaneous Diseases he produced a complete catalogue of the models in which he adhered strictly to the terminology of Willan.

1866 - 1867

Sir Samuel Wilks' (1824-1911) principal contributions to dermatology were the first description of striae cutis atrophicae and of verruca necrogenica "caused by contact with fluids from the dead body". Of this there are five models in the Museum, the patients having been two students and an assistant in the post-mortem

room. He also published an account of the occurrence of *Markings or Furrows on the Nails as the Result of Illness*.

Wilks was a great English physician of his time, perhaps the greatest. He wrote 7 books, 15 separate articles and pamphlets, and some 450 papers in various journals. He was appointed an Assistant Physician just at the time when post-mortem "inspections" had been made the rule and not only to be performed when physicians found themselves in doubt about diagnosis. The new rule was for Wilks a goldmine out of which he extracted a great mass of pathology, much of which he described in the *Transactions of the Pathological Society of London* of which society he was a founder. Wilks regarded a vast addition to knowledge of the pathology of syphilis as his best achievement. The *Guy's Hospital Reports* of 1863 contain a summary entitled *On Syphilitic Affections of the Internal Organs*. According to various sources, a whimsical sense of humour and a passion for truth are said to have combined to limit his practice somewhat. When as President of the College of Physicians he gave annual appreciative notices on the departed Fellows for the year his remarks added notably to the terrors of death.

1867 - 1873.

Charles Hilton Fagge (1838-1883) was the author of the *Principles and Practice of Medicine*, a large and famous book in two volumes which occupied his best energies for 12 years and which was not published until after his early death at the age of 45. The work was re-edited through four editions by P. H. Pye-Smith. Fagge's catalogue of the models, 260 pages long, is itself a most interesting work on the dermatology of the period. It contains not only the case histories of many of the models but a great deal of interesting comment on contemporary dermatology. Addison had strongly opposed any marked departure from Willan's nomenclature but Fagge pointed out that while Alibert had followed Willan with a new system, nine other systems had followed that of Alibert, the latest, introduced by Hebra, resting on an anatomico-pathological basis. He thought that not even this system would maintain itself for any great length of time and he remarked that there were not wanting good reasons why cutaneous eruptions should be more difficult to classify than the recognized diseases to which the internal organs were liable.

He contented himself with a division of the models in which the greater part of dermatology was represented in what appeared to be natural but not mutually exclusive groups. His arrangement is largely acceptable to-day. In the catalogue the old terminology of Willan and the modern are seen side by side.

Judged by his writing alone Fagge was a fine critical dermatologist. According to Moxon he was "one of the most dynamic minds of the age; certainly second to none in our profession". Furthermore, said Moxon, he could never be corrupted into grandeur; a disaster which is said to have befallen some physicians who translated themselves in those days to Grosvenor Street or to Brook Street.

1873 - 1877.

Sir Frederick Taylor (1847-1920) who followed Hilton Fagge made no special contribution to dermatological literature but, like Fagge, he wrote a highly successful *Practice of Medicine* which achieved 16 editions, several after his death. To some of the later editions Barber contributed a section on dermatology.

1877 - 1887.

At the time of his appointment to the Staff, *Philip Henry Pye-Smith* (1840 - 1914) was already regarded as a dermatologist of repute, having acquired a considerable experience in the subject during a long period of study in Paris, Berlin and Vienna. He was a fluent French and German speaker, a Greek and Latin scholar, and altogether a brilliant person. Before being appointed to the Staff he had taught comparative anatomy in the Medical School and subsequently he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society for contributions to zoology. He helped Fagge in writing the catalogue of the models and he added a long section on dermatology (150 pages in rather small print) to Fagge's textbook, which thenceforth became "Fagge and Pye-Smith". Apart from its obvious intrinsic merit, the section on dermatology is interesting because of the author's close association with the leading Continental dermatologists of the time.

1885 - 1887.

Robert Edward Carrington (1852-1887) joined Pye-Smith during the last two years of his tenure of office and he helped in writing the section on dermatology in

Fagge and Pye-Smith, but he died at 34 within a few years of his appointment to the Staff.

1887 - 1919.

From 1887, *Edwin Cooper Perry* (1856-1938), the last of the general physician dermatologists at Guy's Hospital, remained in charge of the Department until his retirement in 1919. Perry's teaching sessions, both in the wards and in the Skin Department, were much enjoyed by students, but his major service to the Hospital and School was of an entirely different order.

Before entering the London Hospital as a first-year medical student he had had a brilliant early career as Captain of Eton and as a classical scholar and Fellow of King's College, Cambridge. At first he had intended to enter the Church. He was appointed Assistant Physician to Guy's at a time when the Hospital and School were in dire need of a man of his special talents and character, and from the first he took charge. He became Dean and Warden of the College immediately and when within a few years the humble post of Superintendent fell vacant he volunteered to take it. He was a magnificent administrator and organiser and he served Guy's in a way that no one had been able to do since Harrison. Like others of great administrative capacity, he was also called upon to undertake outside work as on the establishment of the Military Training College at Millbank, the College of Nursing, and for the King Edward's Fund. He was knighted in 1903 and created G.C.V.O. in 1935. After retirement he served the University of London for 8 years as Principal Officer and Vice-Chancellor.

1919 - 1949.

Harold Wordsworth Barber (1886-1955) was the first Physician to Guy's Hospital to be appointed to the Department for Diseases of the Skin with no other duties. For about 70 years dermatology at Guy's had been in the hands of some of the outstanding physicians of a great era at the hospital. Apart from Addison, whose stature appears not to have been fully appreciated at home during his lifetime, three had been Fellows of the Royal Society, two were Presidents of the Royal College of Physicians, four were Harveian Orators and others had gained honorary foreign degrees and recognition of various other kinds.

The Physicians had taken good care of dermatology and no doubt the students had been well instructed. Among their contemporaries elsewhere at home Wilson, Hutchinson, Tilbury Fox and Radcliffe Crocker had contributed more to dermatology but the Guy's men were not primarily dermatologists and did not become so until Barber's day.

Throughout this long period, the dominant theme at Guy's had been the steady advance in knowledge of structural pathology. When Barber was appointed this age was regarded as over and Wilks was spoken of as the last of the great morbid anatomists. Few physicians were now interested in dermatology and some claimed with both pride and ample justification to know nothing about it. The era of the major aetiological hypotheses was in full swing and corresponding to developments in bacteriology, the concept of focal infection as the cause of much obscure disease held much attention. Barber believed firmly in the validity of this as well as of other general concepts which were on the way to development. His 100 contributions to dermatological literature were nearly all written in support of this outlook. In his final contribution, the Prosser White Oration for 1952, he summarized the observations that he had made during his life's work and the conclusions that he believed could be drawn from them. He appreciated that a new era of advance in medicine by controlled experiment and statistical analysis had set in, but he expressed the fervent hope that the art of the great clinicians should not be allowed to wane.

It is impossible to judge at the present time how much of Barber's point of view is likely to survive. In his time he was the leader in dermatology in England. A fine clinician, a magnificent teacher and a gifted speaker and writer, he had a great following in whom he inspired both admiration and affection and by many of whom he was regarded as incomparable. His retirement from the Staff marked the end of a century of dermatology at Guy's Hospital.



Thomas Addison.