
On the anatomy of the breast, by Sir Astley
Paston Cooper, 1840

Rare Medical Books

1840

On the anatomy of the breast - Introduction

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INTRODUCTION.

A few years ago, I presented to the public a work on those Diseases of the Breast which bore some resemblance to malignant affections, and had been frequently confounded with them. These abnormal growths, although they might simulate with such morbid changes in some of their characters and symptoms, yet differed from them in their progress, in the treatment which they required, and in the probability of a fatal termination.

It was my original design to follow up that work with a description of the Malignant Diseases of the Breast; but upon approaching the subject, I found that much confusion had been created by authors, who, without discriminating between natural and morbid structures, had written on the complaints of this gland. Thus we are told that scirrhus is marked and distinguished by its fibrous character: whereas, the fibrous appearance, in a great degree, belongs

to the normal condition of the organ, and is not a product of the disease. Many other equally erroneous statements might be mentioned, and for this reason I felt that it was absolutely necessary to give an account of the natural structure of the Breast, before its morbid changes could be properly explained or understood.

In performing this task, I have restricted myself to describing from my own preparations only; and if every author in our profession would adopt this plan, and merely write on what he is capable of demonstrating, preserving, and exhibiting to others, the medical world would not be overwhelmed with those crude opinions, theories, and conjectures, which, according to the present system of quoting all that has been written, are sure to compose the greater part of the works that issue from the press. My rule has been to publish that only which I could show to those who were sceptical, and were yet desirous of arriving at the truth. The preparations delineated in my works on Hernia, on Dislocations and Fractures, on the Breast, on the Testis, and on the Thymus Gland, are all in good preservation, and

can be immediately referred to, as they are either deposited at St. Thomas's or Guy's Hospital, or in my private collection. The parts represented in the present Description of the Structure of the Breast, are all in my own house.

Let all who labour in the Science of the Profession adopt this method, and we shall soon have numerous and useful specimens of normal and of morbid structures. Such preparations, collected both by private teachers, and by the medical persons attached to our different Hospitals, will form a basis of valuable and undeniable publications for the present generation and for posterity.

Those who wish to consult the best foreign authors upon the Structure of the Breast, should refer to the works of Morgagni, Haller, Meckel, Bichat by Roux, Marjolin, and Müller, names which bespeak the highest excellence in the Science to which these anatomists have devoted themselves.
