

A THESIS ON

"THE EPIDEMIOLOGY OF RHEUMATIC INFECTION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA"

- PART I. An historical outline of the progress of knowledge
in acute rheumatism until 1939.
- PART II. A report on the epidemiology of rheumatic infection
in South Australia.
- PART III. General summary and indications wherein the study
has advanced and supported medical knowledge of
juvenile rheumatism.



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HISTORICAL OUTLINE OF THE PROGRESS OF KNOWLEDGE

IN ACUTE RHEUMATISM UNTIL 1939.

INTRODUCTION.

"We can conquer Nature only by obeying her laws, and, in order to obey these, we must first learn what they are."

Winwood Reede.

Before embarking on a research into any aspect of disease, it is advantageous to halt for a moment and look back over the growth of knowledge in the subject that has taken place since the disease was first recognized. For in this way, by the study of previous enquiries, and the impartial assessment of the value of the various results obtained and opinions expressed, the research worker is helped in forming an idea of the possible lines of investigation that may be expected to help in the elucidation of the particular problem under question, and is guided therein.

In the following historical survey of the growth of knowledge in acute rheumatism, it is not proposed to give a complete resumé covering all aspects of the disease, but principally of those which pertain to the research under question, namely, "The Epidemiology of Rheumatic Infection in South Australia."

MEANING OF THE TERM "RHEUMATISM".

The word "rheumatism" has been loosely applied throughout the ages, and much confusion of thought has resulted therefrom. This is admirably summed up in the aphorism of the late Sir Joseph Verco, of Adelaide, who often repeated to students who came under his teaching that "the term 'rheumatism' is an asylum for ignorance."

The word itself is derived from the Greek terms "rheuma" and "rheo", meaning respectively "a flux" and "to flow". The terms "rheumatism" and "reumes" were used synonymously, and with lack of precise interpretation, by ancient and medieval physicians to designate those morbid conditions which resulted, as they thought, from "a defluxion" or flowing of mucus or an acrid humour upon

some part or other of the body with the production of pain.