

W. E. DALPÉ, 1898.

## ALBINISM.<sup>1</sup>

BY

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*Definition.*—Albinism is usually defined as a hereditary condition marked by a complete absence of pigment in the iris, skin and hair. However correct this statement is, a long residence with albinos in this Province and in New England, has led me to associate with this condition certain functional and organic alterations in the skin and appendages, and about which I will have to say a few words.

Albino means white and was a term used by the Portuguese to designate the white negroes whom they met on the Western Coast of Africa; by extension it is used to designate any pigmentless individual.

*Occurrence.*—Albinism is an affection of a world-wide distribution and not limited to the dark races as was surmised. In the Medical Literature, of Europe and America, several accounts have been given, none better or more tersely written than that found in Morrow's Handbook of skin diseases, by one of our best dermatologists.

This affection is not peculiar to man but similar conditions are found to exist among the animals, birds and even insects.

### CHARACTERISTICS.

*Eyes.*—The irides are usually perfectly pigmentless. In many, these transparent perforated screens take on a pinkish or reddish hue from the capillaries of the fundus. Balmanno Squire reported a case, which he calls atypical and in whom the irides were dark blue *Lancet*, Feb. 1895. Zeimssen recognising that such blue irides do occur claims this is due to some phenomenon of interference of light. They have appeared to me, on more than one occasion, very much chameleon-like, the most constant colours being the white and the pink.

Consequent upon this pigmentless condition of the irides, the camera obscura of the eye is changed to a camera lucida, and the image falling on the retina, being more diffuse, loses proportionately of its clearness.

Again as the sensitive eye-plates of the retina are ill-protected, nystagmus,<sup>2</sup> photophobia,<sup>3</sup> coloboma, (Wm. Geo. Sym, Edin.), and oscillatory movements of the eyes may be induced (A. J. Balmanno

<sup>1</sup> Prize Essay McGill Medical Society, 1897.

<sup>2</sup> "Nystagmus" and "oscillatory movements" though in some respects analogous, are not necessarily identical.

<sup>3</sup> Usually congenital, and hence it may be doubted that non-pigmented irides hold any causative relations to it.