

# The Canadian Journal of Medicine and Surgery

A JOURNAL PUBLISHED MONTHLY IN THE INTERESTS OF  
MEDICINE AND SURGERY

---

---

VOL. XVII.

TORONTO, APRIL, 1905.

NO. 4.

---

---

## *Original Contributions.*

NIELS KYBERG FINSEN—HIS LIFE AND WORK.\*

BY CHARLES R. DICKSON, M.D., TORONTO,

Electrologist to Toronto General Hospital, Hospital for Sick Children, St. Michael's Hospital;  
Fellow and ex-President of American Electro-Therapeutic Association, Member  
of Canadian Institute, etc.

THE beneficial action of sunlight, both in maintaining health and in combating various diseases, has been recognized from time immemorial. The ancient Greeks anointed their bodies and exposed themselves to sunshine on the flat roofs of their houses, both for pleasure and health. The Romans also indulged in the sun-bath, frequently following it with cold sponging, according to Vestricius and Cicero. Later, they had special buildings, called solaria, in which they took the Heliosis or sun-bath. Herodotus, C. Aurelian, and Antyllus recommend sun-baths in diseases of the skin and other affections, and many of the writers of antiquity advise the use of the sun-bath as a curative agent.†

This early belief in the therapeutic value of the rays of the sun is well nigh universal. Natives of South and Central America and Mexico lie full length on their backs for hours in the blazing tropical sun, as a remedy for consumption, a method said to antedate the advent of the Spaniard.‡ And in China, Japan, Hayti, and Mexico, the injurious effects of sun-

---

\* Revised Abstract of a paper read at meeting of Canadian Institute, Toronto, Jan. 28, 1905.

† Freund, "Radio-Therapy."

‡ Rogers, "Luco-Therapy."