

THE SHORTHAND PUBLICATIONS OF SIR WILLIAM RICHARD GOWERS

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Objective: To examine the shorthand publications of Sir William Richard Gowers. **Background:** Gowers developed an almost obsessive interest in Pitman shorthand. During the later part of his active career (1894–1910), the bulk of his professional writing, comprising nearly 100 articles, was printed entirely in Pitman shorthand in the *Phonographic Record of Clinical Teaching and Medical Science*. The obscurity and rarity of this periodical, and the increasingly arcane nature of Pitman shorthand, has left the bulk of these articles “buried in obscurity and locked up in code” (M. Critchley, 1949). **Design/Methods:** A complete set of Gowers’ shorthand publications as listed in his standard bibliography was compiled. Transcription of the Pitman shorthand outlines was performed by a qualified Pitman shorthand transcriber and verified using the contemporaneous *Phonographic Outlines of Medical Terms* (1902) as an authoritative guide. **Results:** The first transcription of Gowers’ shorthand publications has now been completed. The history of Gowers’ interest in shorthand and his efforts to proselytize the medical profession is reviewed. Selected excerpts are presented from his shorthand articles, which include papers devoted to problems in practical diagnosis, notes on clinical teaching, and the shorthand transcriptions of his lectures at Queen Square and at University College Hospital on such diverse subjects as myelitis, neurosyphilis, polio, muscular dystrophy, tumors, vascular disease, epilepsy, and the nervous system in old age. **Conclusions:** The previously unpublished transcriptions of his shorthand articles represent a major and previously inaccessible part of Gowers’ neurologic opus. These articles exemplify Gowers as a practicing neurologist and teacher, and significantly expand our insights into one of neurology’s most significant and influential figures.

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Comment from Robert A. Gross, MD, PhD, FAAN, Editor-in-Chief: An analysis of little-seen (or read) primary documentation. In another article (see elsewhere in this issue), Sacks mentions the short-hand notation in his exploration of Gowers’ memory.

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