MEDICAL HISTORY IN ENGLAND.

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The neglect of medical history has been lamented in every civilised language, but no tongue has more cause for eloquence on this subject than the English, since of all nations distinguished for their contributions to medical progress the British has probably done least towards the investigation of its history. Not only is there no complete English work on the subject comparable to those of Sprengel, Haeser, Daremberg, or Puccinotti, but even the special field of the national medical annals has been but scantily cultivated.

The M. S.S. of John of Ardern, Gilbert the Englishman, and Richard of Wendover repose peacefully in the libraries of Oxford, Cambridge or London, where they will probably remain undisturbed till some benevolent German or Frenchman comes and edits them for us; and though biography is the one strong point of the English medical historian, if we want any detailed information about the two latter we must refer to M. Littré's articles in the *Histoire Littéraire de la France*. Even the little that has been done for the study of early English medicine is due chiefly to labourers in other departments. Thus the Saxon *Leech-Book* (Laeceboc) was translated by the Rev. O. Cockayne in the Rolls Series of historical documents, while a middle-English version of Lanfranc's *Surgery* and the *Anatomie* of Vicary were published by the Early English Text Society.

Nor is this neglect confined to the earlier period. Had Leibnitz or Descartes belonged to the medical profession and left medical M.S.S., how often would they not have been printed, translated and commented upon! The greatest of English philosophers, John Locke, was a physician, yet his medical writings still remain unedited, and it was only in the last few months that the first imperfect translation of his interesting *Clinical Observations* appeared in the Medical Magazine. Indeed, the only important study of the history of medicine in England is South's *Memorials of the Craft of Surgery,* London, 1888.

This state of things may be explained partly by the fact that, in

England, medical history, like most other matters, has been left to private effort. While the subject is taught officially in many continental universities, including even those of Russia, in Britain the introduction of history as a definite portion of the medical curriculum has not yet reached the stage of serious suggestion.

Something also may be due to the extreme practical tendencies and eye to the pecuniary value of things which, next to his readiness to devote himself to perdition, is proverbially attributed to the Briton, and a French or German physician who should urge an English colleague to devote himself to a great work on medical history might not unreasonably expect to be answered by the two most widely known phrases in the language: "Goddam! Time is money".

Anyhow, the fact remains that the chief English works on the subject have been the *parerga* or side labours of men busily employed in other departments, and therefore represent at best only the *disjecta membra gigantis,* the scattered fragments of what might have been a great achievement.

The first of these is the *History of Physic* by John Freind M.D. (1726) a continuation of Le Clerc's French work from the time of Galen to the beginning of the 16th century. It thus has neither beginning nor end, and, though an admirable production both in style and matter for the time at which it was written, is now antiquated as history, and appears frigid and formal to our modern taste in diction. Nevertheless there is only one English medical historical work to compare with it, the translation of *Paulus Aegineta* by Francis Adams (3 vols. 1845—47). The commentary which accompanies this translation gives a fuller account of ancient and mediaeval medical theory and practice than can be obtained from any other work in English, and the marvel of the achievement is that it was written by a Scotch general practitioner in the intervals of a large and scattered practice. He thus describes his work:— "I began the translation of the *Aegineta* in the end of Nov. 1827 and finished on 28th April 1829. I never at any period of my life underwent so much drudgery, and during three months I sat up late and rose early, and snatched every moment I could from the duties of my profession. At that time my practice, though not lucrative, was extensive, especially in the obstetric line. I managed however, to work at my translation 10 hours a day".

Adams also translated the genuine works of Hippocrates, and edited *Aretaeus* and Theophilus *De Fabrica.* In this last work he was

assisted by Dr. Greenhill, the translator of Rhazes' *On Small-pox and Measles*, a medical scholar whose knowledge of Arabic would have made him an ideal historian of the science.

The work of Drs. Payne and Creighton has already been introduced to the readers of *Janus* and suffices to show that the absence of a great English Medical History is not due to the want of men able to write it, while in special departments Ferguson's *Bibliographia Paracelsica* (Glasgow 1877—90) is not unworthy to stand beside the labours of a Schubert and Sudhoff.

Attempts at general histories of medicine in English have hitherto usually resulted in compilations based mainly on *Freind* and the French translation of *Sprengel,* with the aid of extracts from Cyclopaedias and biographical dictionaries. Such are the works of Hamilton (1831) and Bostock (1834), Meryon (incomplete) and Russell, both published in 1861. Some indeed contain sections showing original research, e.g. the chapters on Persian and Parsee medicine in Dr. Heerajee's *History of the Medical Art* (Bombay 1880) and that on the Burmese in Dr. Macdonald's *The Practice of Medicine among the Burmese, translated from Original M.S.S., with an Historical Sketch of the Progress of Medicine from the Earliest Times* (Edinburgh 1878). With these may be classed several works on the medicine of ancient India, such as Royle, *Antiquity of Hindu Medicine* (1837), Wise, *Commentary of the Hindu System of Medicine* (1860) and *Review of the History of Medicine* (1867), Webb, *Historical Relations of Ancient Hindu with Greek Medicine* (1850).

Medical biography as distinct from history has been largely cultivated, as witness the collections of Aitken, Pettigrew, and Munk (Roll of the College of Physicians). Such collections vary greatly in value, ranging from books about doctors composed of anecdotes and suited for railway reading to the admirable biographies of Greek physicians contributed by the late Dr. Greenhill to Smith's *Classical Dictionary.*

In this higher class may be included the accounts of *Heroes of Medicine* given in the *Asclepiad* a quarterly journal written entirely by the late Sir B. W. Richardson M.D. between the years 1884—95, a series which is now being carried on in the *Practitioner.*

Of more importance is the admirable selection of biographies entitled *Masters of Medicine* now in course of publication (London: Fisher Unwin) in which the lives of Hunter, Harvey, Simpson, Stokes, Brodie, Jenner, Sydenham, Bernard, Helmholtz, Vesalius, (the first five of which have already appeared) are described by com-

petent authorities. In most of these collections, however, the excessive proportion of native compared with foreign Masters and predominance of modern examples show that the opportunity for a wide and impartial survey of medical history has been sacrificed to pecuniary considerations and the necessity of attracting the 'general reader'.

Reproductions of inaugural addresses or annual orations dealing with some portion of medical history appear from time in our journals, as well as slight historical and biographical sketches inserted for the purpose of breaking up or giving a literary flavour to what are considered more important matters. Among these may be noticed an interesting series now appearing in the *British Medical Journal* under the title *Archaeologica Medica*, under which heading the following subjects have been treated during the last few months:— The Human Foot in Art. William Cowper, the Anatomist. Clopton Havers, an Early English Histologist. Boerhaave's Treatment of Syphilis. Sir John Floyer, the Teller of the Pulse. Old Scottish doctors. William Cheselden, Anatomist and Surgeon.

Among other recently published medico-historical books and articles are:— Jackson, T. V., *The Medical Profession in Britain from the earliest period to the Victorian Era*, Brit. Med. Journal 1898, vol. 2., 199 and 807. Caton, R., *The Temples and Ritual of Asklepios at Epidaurus and Athens*, B. M. J. 1898 I., 1509, 1572. Davies, —., *Life and Works of Charles Bell*, St. Bartholomew's Hospital Journal VI, 149. Metcalfe, R., *Vincent Priessnitz, Founder of Hydropathy*, London 1898. Paget, S., *Ambroise Paré and his Times.*