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of the most celebrated  
physicians, surgeons etc.....

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BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS

OF THE MOST CELEBRATED

PHYSICIANS, SURGEONS

ETC. ETC.

WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO  
THE ADVANCEMENT OF MEDICAL SCIENCE.

BY

THOMAS JOSEPH PETTIGREW,

F. R. S. F. S. A. F. L. S.

Member of the Royal College of Surgeons; Surgeon to the Asylum for Female Orphans, &c.; late Lecturer on Anatomy, Physiology, Pathology, and the Principles and Practice of Surgery; Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Gottingen, &c. &c. &c.

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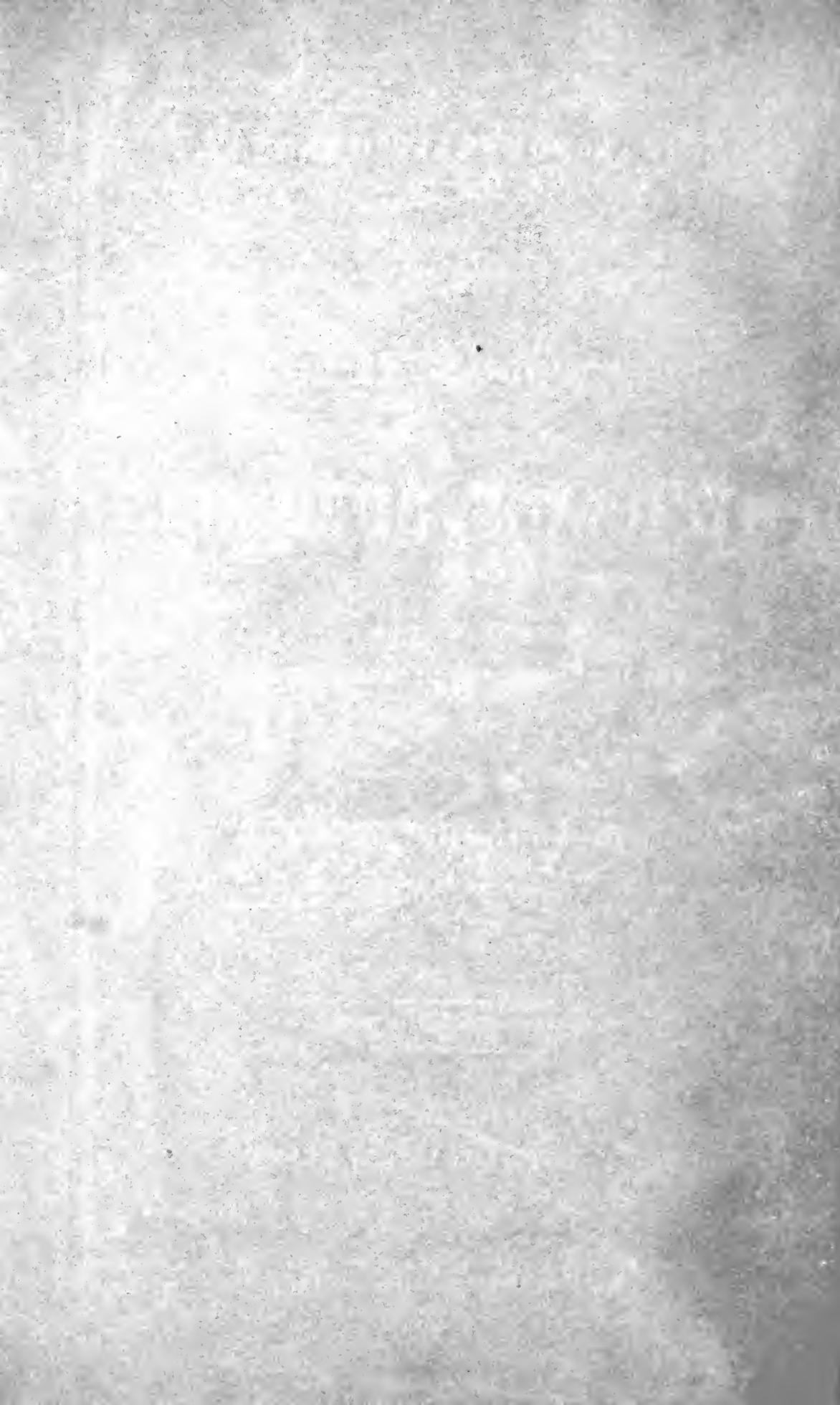
“APOLLINEO NOMINA DIGNA CHORO.”

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*Johannes Radzike*





## JOHN RADCLIFFE, M.D.

“The lawyer is judged by the virtue of his pleading, and not by the issue of the cause. The master of the ship is judged by the directing his course aright, and not by the fortune of the voyage. But the physician, and perhaps the politician, hath no particular acts demonstrative of his ability, but is judged most by the event.”—BACON.

THE biography of this eccentric man has been repeatedly written. He has been described as one “who lived, if any man ever did so, entirely after his own humour, and in the completest disregard of the opinions of the world.” As a practical physician, he was unrivalled. He amassed a large fortune, and he devoted it to the promotion of learning and science. His eccentricities were remarkable, and have been freely circulated. A collection of the various anecdotes related of him would form a very curious and interesting volume.

JOHN RADCLIFFE was a native of Yorkshire, and born at Wakefield in 1650. He received instruction in the Greek and Latin languages at the grammar-school of this town, and when he had reached his fifteenth year, he was sent to University College, Oxford. At this college he took his first degree in arts, and afterwards removed to Lincoln College, of which he was subsequently elected a Fellow. Quickness of intellect, for which he was ever remarkable, enabled him rapidly to acquire information in the several branches of medical study; and having, it is said, made considerable progress in botany, chemistry, and anatomy, he took a degree of M.A. in 1672, and then enrolled himself for medicine. Pretensions to learning, he had none; and whatever deficiency he may have manifested in this respect, was compensated by a wit, vivacity, and shrewdness which characterized every act of his life. He appears, indeed, to have entertained but a mean opinion of the practice of physic, and consulted very few books.\* When

\* Garth said, humorously enough, that, for Radcliffe to leave a library, was as if “an eunuch should found a seraglio.”

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Dr. Bathurst, the master of Trinity College, visited him, he inquired of him where his study was. To which Radcliffe, pointing to a few phials, a skeleton, and a herbal, replied, "Sir, this is Radcliffe's library." He held that the whole mystery of physic might be written on "half a sheet of paper." This, however, ill comports with that which he is said to have uttered towards the latter part of his life, that, "when a young practitioner, he possessed twenty remedies for every disease; and at the close of his career, he found twenty diseases for which he had not one remedy." This reflection, the result of his extensive experience and penetration, will convey to every member of the profession a most impressive lesson. He entertained an abhorrence of quackery. Among many of the artifices by which the credulous have been imposed upon, the pretensions of the Urinoscopists of former days were not the least significant. A foolish woman, provided with the infallible indication of disease, came to Radcliffe, and, dropping a curtesy, told him that, having heard of his great fame, she made bold to bring him a fee, by which she hoped his worship would be prevailed upon to tell her the distemper her husband lay sick of, and to prescribe the means for his relief. "Where is he?" cries the Doctor. "Sick in bed, four miles off," replies the woman. Taking the vessel, and casting an eye upon its contents, he inquired of the woman what trade the patient was of; and, learning that he was a boot-maker, "Very well," replied the Doctor; and having retired for a moment to make the requisite substitution, "Take this home with you; and if your husband will undertake to fit me with a pair of boots by its inspection, I will make no question of prescribing for his distemper by a similar examination."

In 1675 Radcliffe took his Bachelor's degree in medicine, and began to practise; and in 1682 he received the degree of M.D. He remained at Oxford two years after this, and enjoyed great reputation, notwithstanding the numerous disputes in which he was involved with the older practitioners, who could not tolerate his disregard of all ancient rules and practice. In 1684 he removed to London, and resided in Bow-street, Covent Garden. The chief practice of the metropolis was, at this time, held by Dr. Lower, whose reputation, however, was on the decline, on account of his attachment to Whig principles, (for politics and fashion have ever had much to do with the success of a man in physic,) and in less than a year from his arrival in town, Radcliffe was in the possession of an extensive and lucrative practice, receiving not less than twenty guineas a day. His wit and humour contributed not a little to his popularity, and his society was much courted. The princess Anne of Denmark appointed him her physician in 1686.

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“ His conversation at this time, (says one of his biographers) was held in as good repute as his advice ; and what with his pleasantry of discourse, and readiness of wit in making replies to any sort of questions, he was a diverting companion to the last degree, insomuch, that he was very often sent for, and presented with fees for pretended ailments, when the real design of both sexes, that were equally delighted with him, was to reap advantage by his way of talk. Not but he was often out of humour at being dealt with after that manner, and would frequently give biting replies to such as were pressing with him for his prescriptions upon trifling occasions.”

Radcliffe is said to have been very greedy of his fees, and avaricious in other respects. He had a great love of accumulating riches ; but he was no niggard in their distribution. Thus we find, that, as early as 1687, he was desirous of assisting the college at Oxford at which he was first admitted, and that he caused the eastern window over the altar of University College to be put up at his own expense. This was a magnificent gift : it consists of beautifully painted glass, representing the Nativity of Christ. Beneath is an inscription relating to the donor.—“ D.D. Joan. Radcliffe, M.D. hujus Collegii quondam Socius, A.D. 1687.” This is not strictly correct, as he was senior scholar, but not a fellow of this college. He was a fellow of Lincoln ; but he resigned his fellowship in 1677, owing to the opposition of Dr. Marshall, the rector, against whom Radcliffe had uttered some pleasantries, and who, in revenge, opposed the Doctor’s application for a faculty place, to dispense with his taking holy orders, which the statutes of the college required that he should do.

No man was ever less calculated than Radcliffe to be a courtier, for his freedom often amounted to insolence ; yet he was much employed at court. This must have arisen from his celebrity as a practitioner. The love of person and ease, and the hope of averting pain and death, have never failed to operate with great power in kings and potentates. After the Revolution, he was much about the person of King William, and his court. When that sovereign returned from Holland in 1699, he was seriously indisposed, and he sent for Radcliffe, and showed him his ankles, which were very much swollen, whilst the other parts of his body were greatly emaciated. “ What think you of these ? ” “ Why, truly,” replied the physician, “ I would not have your majesty’s two legs for your three kingdoms ; ” which freedom so lost the king’s favour, that no intercessions could ever recover it. The king’s employment of Radcliffe arose, in the first instance, from his gratitude for the recovery of two of his favourites, Mr. Bentinck,\* and Mr. Zulestein,† and for which the physician was presented by the king with 500 guineas, and an offer to be one of his majesty’s physicians, with a salary of £200 more than any other. Radcliffe accepted the present, but declined

\* Afterwards Earl of Portland.

† Afterwards Earl of Rochford.

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the appointment, it is conjectured from worldly motives, the settlement of the crown being then in its infancy, and its security likely to be disturbed by any accident. The weakness of the constitution of the king, however, rendered Radcliffe's visits of necessary frequency; and it is said, that, for the first eleven years of his majesty's reign, the physician received upwards of 600 guineas annually.

In 1695, he was sent abroad to attend the Earl of Albemarle, a great favourite of his majesty, and who had a considerable command in the army, during the campaign which ended with the taking of Namur. Radcliffe remained in the camp a week only; was successful in the treatment of his patient, and received from King William £1,200; and from Lord Albermarle 400 guineas, and a diamond ring; he was offered also the dignity of a baronet, which he begged to decline, on the plea of having no children to inherit the title. The humour possessed by Radcliffe, is illustrated by an anecdote told by Pittis, his biographer, upon occasion of an interview with the king, relative to his state of health.

“ The king, when the Doctor was admitted, was reading Sir Roger L'Estrange's new version of Æsop's Fables, and told him, that he had once more sent for him, to try the effects of his great skill, notwithstanding he had been told by his body-physicians, who were not sensible of his inward decay, that he might yet live many years, and would very speedily recover. Upon which the Doctor, having put some interrogatories to the king, very readily asked leave of his majesty to turn to a fable in the book before him, which would let the king know how he had been treated, and read it to him in these words:—‘ Pray, sir, how do you find yourself?’ says the doctor to his patient. ‘ Why, truly,’ says the patient, ‘ I have had a most violent sweat.’ ‘ Oh! the best sign in the world,’ quoth the doctor. And then a little while after, he is at it again, with a ‘ Pray how do you find your body?’ ‘ Alas!’ says the other, ‘ I have just now had such a terrible fit of horror and shaking upon me!’ ‘ Why, this is all as it should be,’ says the physician, ‘ it shows a mighty strength of nature.’ And then he comes over him the third time with the same question again: ‘ Why, I am all swelled,’ says t'other, ‘ as if I had a dropsy.’ ‘ Best of all,’ quoth the doctor, and goes his way. Soon after this, comes one of the sick man's friends to him, with the same question, ‘ How he felt himself?’ ‘ Why, truly, so well,’ says he, ‘ that I am e'en ready to die of I know not how *many good signs and tokens.*’

“ ‘ May it please your majesty, yours and the sick man's case is the very same,’ cries Radcliffe—‘ you are buoyed up with hopes that your malady will soon be driven away, by persons that are not apprized of means to do it, and know not the true cause of your ailment; but I must be plain with you, and tell you that, in all probability, if your majesty will adhere to my prescriptions, it may be in my power to lengthen out your life for three or four years; but beyond that time, nothing in physic can protract it, for the juices of your stomach are all vitiated; your whole mass of blood is corrupted, and your nutriment, for the most part, turns to water. However, if your majesty will forbear making long visits to the Earl of Bradford, (where the king was wont to drink very hard,) I'll try what can be done to make you live easily, tho' I cannot venture to say I can make you live longer than I have told you.’ He then left a recipe behind him, which was so happy in its effects, as to enable the king, not only to make a progress in the western parts of his kingdom, but to go abroad, and divert himself at his palace at Loo, in Holland.”

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Radcliffe is reported to have attended the lady of Sir John Holt in a severe illness, with unusual diligence, and to have said that he did so out of pique to the husband, who was supposed not to be over fond of her. Many instances of the caprice of Radcliffe are upon record. Bishop Atterbury relates, that when the lady of Sir John Trevor, the Master of the Rolls, was dying, she was given over by Radcliffe as incurable. The master, thinking it a compliment to Radcliffe, not to join any of the London physicians with him, sent to Oxford for Dr. Breach, an old crony, to consult on that occasion; which made such a *breach* with Radcliffe, that he set out in a few days for Bath, where he is represented "as delighting scarce in any other company but that of papists." Richardson relates the following of Radcliffe and his successor Mead.

" 'Mead, I love you,' says Radcliffe, 'and now I will tell you a sure secret to make your fortune; use all mankind ill.' And it certainly was his own practice. He owned he was avaricious, even to spunging, whenever he any way could, at a tavern reckoning, a sixpence or shilling among the rest of the company, under pretence of hating (as he ever did) to change a guinea, 'because (said he) it slips away so fast.'" He could never be brought to pay bills without much following and importunity; nor then, if there appeared any chance of wearying them out. A paviour, after long and fruitless attempts, caught him just getting out of his chariot at his own door, in Bloomsbury-square, (where he had removed from Bow-street,) and set upon him. 'Why, you rascal,' said the Doctor, 'do you pretend to be paid for such a piece of work? why, you have spoiled my pavement, and then covered it over with earth to hide your bad work.' 'Doctor,' said the paviour, 'mine is not the only bad work that the earth hides.' 'You dog you,' said the Doctor, 'are you a wit? you must be poor, come in,—and paid him. 'Nobody,' adds Mr. Richardson, 'ever practised this rule 'of using all mankind ill,' less than Dr. Mead, (who told me himself the story,) and who has, I have been informed by great physicians, got as much again by his practice as Dr. Radcliffe did.'"

An anecdote must here be related of the Doctor and Sir Godfrey Kneller.

"When Radcliffe resided in Bow-street, his garden-wall was contiguous to that of Sir Godfrey's, who was remarkable for his collection of exotic and choice plants, of which the Doctor was a great admirer, and he solicited of the great painter, with whom he enjoyed an intimacy, to permit a door to be made for free intercourse with both gardens, but in such a manner, that no inconvenience should be experienced by either family. Sir Godfrey most readily consented to the proposal; but the Doctor's servants took such liberties, and occasioned such destruction of Sir Godfrey's plants, that he was under the necessity of complaining to the Doctor, who, however, took no notice of the matter. Upon which, the painter sent word by one of his servants, that he should be obliged to brick up the door; a threat that roused Radcliffe's choler, who sent a message back, that Sir Godfrey 'might do what he thought fit, in relation to the door, so that he *didn't paint it*.' The servant for some time hesitated to deliver this impertinent reply; but being commanded by Sir Godfrey to deliver it word for word, which being done, the painter directed him to return to the Doctor, present his service to him, and say that he could take *any thing from him but physic*."

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In 1694, Queen Mary caught the small-pox, and died. According to Bishop Burnet, the fatal termination of the disease was owing to a want of skill on the part of Radcliffe. This is not to be credited, for Radcliffe was called in too late to be of any service, and he had brought himself into notice at Oxford, chiefly by his judicious adoption of the method proposed by the renowned Sydenham, for the treatment of this malady. Radcliffe condemned the means that had been employed in the case of the queen, and declared "her majesty was a dead woman, for it was impossible to do any good in her case, when remedies had been given that were so contrary to the nature of the distemper; yet he would endeavour to do all that lay in his power to give her some ease." His successful treatment of the Duke of Beaufort in the small-pox is upon record, and there certainly is no ground for impeaching the ability of Radcliffe on this head.

Radcliffe lost the favour of the princess Anne, for neglecting to visit her when sent for, owing to his attachment to the bottle, and Dr. Gibbons was appointed physician in his room. When Radcliffe was sent for, he promised to go to St. James's soon after; but neglecting to do so, a second messenger was sent, to detail the case; upon which he swore by his Maker, "that her highness's distemper was nothing but the vapours, and that she was in as good a state of health as any woman breathing, could she but believe it." The Earl of Godolphin endeavoured to reinstate Radcliffe, but the queen could not be prevailed upon to reappoint him, saying, that he would send her word again, "that her ailments were nothing but the vapours." He was, however, consulted in critical matters, and is said to have received large sums for his prescriptions, although he was not engaged as the queen's domestic physician. In the last illness of the queen he was sent for to Carshalton, about noon, by order of the council. He said, he had "taken physic, and couldn't come." This is told upon the authority of Mr. Ford in a letter to Dean Swift. It appears that for this conduct, Sir Justinian Isham, a bottle-companion of the Doctor's, and a member of the House of Commons, moved that he be summoned to attend in his place, (for he represented the town of Buckingham, to which he had been elected in 1713 in this parliament,) in order to be censured for not attending her majesty. From a letter which is extant of Radcliffe to one of his friends, it would seem that he had not been sent for by the council, but by some private person, (Lady Masham,) for he deplores the death of the queen; and after commending what had been suggested for her relief by Dr. Mead, he proceeds to condemn the people about her: "The plagues of Egypt fall on them," says he; "I know the nature of attending crowned

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heads in their last moments too well, to be fond of waiting upon them, without being sent for by a proper authority." Public resentment, however, was strongly manifested, and Radcliffe was not without fears of being assassinated, as appears by a letter addressed to Mead, August 3rd, 1714. He lived only three months after the death of the queen, and his days have generally been considered as shortened by the dread of popular vengeance, and the want of society in the country village in which he closed his life. He died the 1st of November, 1714, being just sixty-four years of age.

The pleasures of the table had great charms for Radcliffe; and Dr. Lettsom has reported a curious relation on this subject, as told to him by the eccentric Dr. Monsey.\*

Radcliffe's professional brethren in general held, or affected to hold, him in great contempt as a physician; but Mead says, that "he was deservedly at the head of his profession, on account of his great medical penetration and experience." He waged perpetual war with his brethren, and was lampooned and ridiculed in a variety of ways. Pope, Arbuthnot, and others, it is known, were engaged to write the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*. Arbuthnot writes to Swift,

"Pray remember Martin, who is an innocent fellow, and will not disturb your solitude. The ridicule of medicine is so copious a subject, that I must only here and there touch it. I have made him study physic from the apothecaries' bills, where there is a good, plentiful field for a satire upon the present practice. One of his projects was, by a stamp upon blistering-plasters and melilot by the yard, to raise money for the government, and to give it to Radcliffe and others to farm. There was a problem about the doses of purging medicines, published four years ago, showing that they ought to be in proportion to the bulk of the patient. From thence, Martin endeavours to determine the question about the weight of the ancient men, by the doses of physic that were given them. One of his last inventions was a map of diseases for the three cavities of the body, and one for the external parts, just like the four quarters of the world. Then the great diseases are like capital cities, with their symptoms all like streets and suburbs, with the roads that lead to other diseases. It is thicker set with towns than any Flanders map you ever saw. Radcliffe is painted at the corner of the map, contending for the universal empire of this world, and the rest of the physicians opposing his ambitious designs, with a project of a treaty of partition to settle peace."

May 26th, 1704, Radcliffe carried some cause against an apothecary, and two days before, Atterbury says, "a play was acted, wherein the Doctor was extremely ridiculed upon that head, of his quarrel with the apothecary. A great number of persons of quality were present; among the rest, the Duchess of Marlborough, and the maids of honour. The

\* See Letter to Dr. Cuming in Pettigrew's *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Dr. Lettsom*, vol. i. p. 44.

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passages where the Doctor was affronted, were received with great applause." Radcliffe was also ridiculed by Steele in the *Tatler*,\* under the title of "The Mourning *Æsculapius*, the languishing hopeless lover of the divine Hebe, emblem of youth and beauty." A lady, it is said, had been attended by Radcliffe in a fever; he was smitten by her charms, urged his suit, but was rejected. He never married; but in 1693 was upon the point of contracting an union with the only daughter of a wealthy citizen; but before the conclusion of the affair, Radcliffe ascertained that the lady had not been spotless; and the discovery of an intrigue with her father's book-keeper, put aside the connexion.

In 1703 Radcliffe had an attack of pleurisy, which had nigh proved fatal to him, and partly from his own imprudence, for he neglected himself at the outset of the disease, and indulged in free potations; and, had it not been for the vigorous treatment of Mr. Bernard, the serjeant-surgeon, who took from him 100 ounces of blood, he would probably have sunk under the attack. He was fully sensible of his danger, and made his will, leaving the greatest part of his estate to charity, and several thousand pounds for the relief of sick seamen set ashore. His obstinacy manifested itself throughout, for, having lost the quantity of blood stated, he resolved upon being removed to Kensington, and was taken thither in a chair by four men, and during the journey he fainted away. Dr. Atterbury relates these particulars, and says that he slept immediately afterwards, and that he was likely to do well; "so that the town physicians, who expected to share his practice, begin now to think themselves disappointed." Serjeant-surgeon Bernard, in reply to the inquiries of the queen, related his ungovernable conduct, upon which her majesty remarked, that "nobody had reason to take any thing ill from him, since it was plain he used other people no worse than he used himself." The effect of this severe attack was, however, to make him serious, and he is described as being "very devout."

About the time the bishops were sent to the Tower, Radcliffe was much tormented to turn Papist. Mr. Obadiah Walker, of Trinity College, urged him strongly on this subject; to which Radcliffe made a frank and noble reply. He says:—

"I should be in as unhappy a condition in this life, as you fear I shall be in the next, were I to be treated as a turn-coat; and must tell you, that I can be serious no longer, while you endeavour to make me believe what, I am apt to think, you give no credit to yourself. Fathers, and councils, and antique authorities, may have their influence in their proper places; but should any of them all, though covered with dust 1400 years ago, tell me, that the bottle I am now drinking with some of your acquaintance is a wheelbarrow, and the glass in my hand a salamander, I should ask leave to dissent from them all."

\* No. 44.

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Mr. Walker fell into great poverty and distress, and Radcliffe very generously allowed him, to the day of his death, a handsome competency, and had him, after death, creditably interred.

Radcliffe thought that "it was more the business of a bishop and a statesman, to make curious researches into matters of revelation, than of a physician; and he besought his majesty, who had sent to him in anxiety that he should become a Roman Catholic, out of his grace and favour to all his loving subjects, to let him continue in the religion of the latter, which would neither endanger his government in church nor state."

In the Lansdowne MSS. contained in the British Museum, and marked 979, among Bishop Kennett's collection, I find the following anecdote :

" I remember what Dr. Mede has told to several of his friends, that he fell much into the favour of Dr. Radcliffe a few years before his death, and visited him often at Carshalton, where he observed upon occasion that there was no Bible to be found in the house. Dr. Mede had a mind to supply that defect, without taking notice of it; and therefore one day carried down with him a very beautiful Bible that he had lately bought, which had lain in a closet of King William for his Maj<sup>ies</sup> own use, and left it as a curiosity that he had pickt up by the way. When Dr. Mede made the last visit to him, he found that Dr. R. had read in it as far as about the middle of the Book of Exodus, from whence it might be infered that he had never before read the Scriptures; as I doubt must be infered of Dr. Linacre, from the account given by Sir John Cheke."

Radcliffe entertained great respect for the clergy, and bestowed his patronage with judgment. He promoted Dr. Bingham to the living of Headbourne-worthy, Hants, and Dr. Hudson was advanced to the headship of St. Mary's Hall by his influence and solicitation. His attachment to and respect for this gentleman is said to have occasioned the display of that munificence towards Oxford by which his memory will be held in remembrance. He left his estate in Yorkshire to University College in trust for the foundation of two travelling fellowships, and for the purchase of perpetual advowsons for the members of the said college. He left also £5000 for the enlargement of the building of the same college, £40,000 for the building of a library, £150 per annum to the librarian, and £100 per annum for the purchase of books. *Munus Apolline dignum.*—HOR.

His estates in Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Surrey, &c., were left to his executors for charitable purposes, as they should think best. The Radcliffe Infirmary and the Observatory have been built from these funds, and in 1825 the trustees very properly devoted £2000 towards the building of the present College of Physicians in Pall-Mall East, and £2700 to defray the expenses of completing the Oxford Lunatic Asylum. He left to St. Bartholomew's Hospital £500 per annum towards mending their diet, and £100 per annum for the purchase of linen. His private charities during his life

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were not inconsiderable. He gave various sums in fictitious names, that the donor might not be known; he subscribed liberally to a collection for propagating the Gospel in foreign parts, and to the relief of the poor non-juring clergy, and also to the Episcopalians in Scotland, persecuted by the Presbyterian clergy. He assisted also the celebrated Dr. Sacheverell.

His practice must have been excessive,\* to have accumulated so large a fortune, and many instances of large fees received by him have been recorded. In addition to those which have already been mentioned, he received 1000 guineas for attending the young Prince William, Duke of Gloucester, in 1691. He lost £5000 in a speculation he made in a venture to the East Indies; the vessel, upon its return, being captured, and the property lost. He was induced to this act by Betterton, the tragedian, who was ruined by the event. When Radcliffe heard of his loss, he was enjoying himself at the Bull's Head Tavern, in Clare Market, and he desired his companions not to interrupt the circulation of the glass, "for that he had no more to do but to go up so many pair of stairs, to make himself whole again."

His body lay in state at his residence until the 27th of November, when it was removed to Oxford for burial in St. Mary's Church. Another lying-in state here took place, and a very imposing ceremonial was observed on occasion of his funeral. On the coffin-plate was simply inscribed—

JOHN RADCLIFFE, M.D.  
DIED NOVEMBER THE 1ST, 1714,  
IN THE 65TH YEAR  
OF HIS AGE.

A gold-headed cane is deposited in the library of the Royal College of Physicians, said to be that with which Radcliffe was wont to visit his patients. It was given to Mead, and successively passed to Askew, Pitcairn, and Baillie, by whom it was bequeathed to the College. A very amusing and clever work, embodying the principal occurrences in the lives of these five celebrated physicians, was a few years since published, under the title of "The Gold-headed Cane." The work is attributed to the pen of Dr. Macmichael.

Of professional works, Radcliffe left none. A *Pharmacopœia Radcliffiana* was published in 1716, and Dr. Strother put forth a *Practical Dispensatory*, containing a number of the prescriptions of Radcliffe. *Memoirs of his Life*, interspersed with letters, and accompanied by a copy of his will, were printed in 1715, 1716, and 1736.

\* Dandridge, the apothecary patronized by Radcliffe, is reported to have died worth £50,000.





Mr. Richat





## MARIE FRANÇOIS XAVIER BICHAT, M.D.

“ Oh early ripe ! to thy abundant store,  
What could advancing age have added more ?”

DRYDEN.

XAVIER BICHAT was born on the 11th of November, 1771, at Thoirette, in the department of the Ain. His father, Jean Baptiste, was a Doctor of Medicine of the University of Montpellier; and to his instruction, Xavier Bichat's early knowledge of medicine is to be attributed. He is said to have distinguished himself among his fellow-collegians, in the common course of study; and he is noticed as having been especially versed in the Latin language, and to have excelled in the mathematics. Natural history was also with him a favourite pursuit. He received his anatomical instruction at Lyons, and was remarkable for his general views of the science, for new methods of treating which, he was afterwards so peculiarly characterised. At this time the study of surgery had acquired a preponderating influence, owing to the deserved celebrity of Desault. To this science, Bichat first applied himself, and studied under the chief surgeon of the Hôtel Dieu of Lyons, Marc Antoine Petit. The revolution obliged Bichat to quit Lyons for Paris, where a larger field, and one more adapted to his powers, was presented. At this time his views were directed to military surgery. He accordingly attended the Hôtel Dieu of Paris, and heard the lectures of Desault. An exceedingly instructive practice was established among the attendants of this surgical course: pupils were selected to make an abstract of the lecture of the day, and this was delivered in the presence of the second surgeon. An accident in a great measure determined the future fortunes of Bichat, for the pupil whose turn it was to have delivered the abstract of a long and important lecture on the fractures of the clavicle, being absent, Bichat offered to supply his place. He was blessed with a powerful memory, and Buisson tells us, that his abstract created the most lively sensation; the purity of his style, the precision, the clearness of his ideas, the scrupulous exactness of his conclusions, announced the pro-

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fessor, rather than the scholar. He was heard with much attention, and retired from the theatre applauded and admired. Intelligence of this talented display reached the ears of Desault, through his colleague Manoury; upon which he desired to be made acquainted with Bichat, and was delighted with his sagacity. It is highly creditable to the character and to the judgment of Desault, that he immediately offered to direct his studies, to receive him into his house, and to treat him as a son. The foundation for his future reputation was laid. Desault took him every where, to his public and his private patients. Bichat became his assistant at his operations, and was also engaged in the prosecution of his patron's literary labours. No individual could possibly devote himself with greater ardour to acquire information, than Bichat; it knew no bounds, he acknowledged no obstacle; by incessant application he accumulated an extraordinary fund of information, which was highly important, as it enabled him to hold up against the almost sudden death with which Desault was attacked in 1795.\*

Bichat was now left to depend upon his own resources, and his views began to be developed. In the winter of 1797, he commenced his career as a lecturer, and, not calculating upon a large class, he restricted himself to a small suite of chambers. He had not even a dissecting-room; he confined himself to simple demonstrations; but in these his physiological views extended so naturally from the great discoveries he had made, the result of his genius and observation, and the experiments he performed upon living animals, to demonstrate their truth, excited attention, though not in a degree sufficient to suppress a charge of rashness, when he announced a course of operations at the end of his anatomy; a proceeding at that time very unusual, and only undertaken by the most practised surgeons. His success, however, was complete; but the labour attending such exertions undermined his health, and the necessity of frequent speaking produced a dangerous attack of hæmoptysis. Having somewhat recovered from this, he established a theatre for dissections, which was attended by upwards of eighty pupils. He dissected for the lectures himself, performed his experiments on living animals, and retired in the evening fatigued by the exertions of the day, almost overcome with lassitude and languor—but not to rest; he was engaged, during a great part of the night, in putting Desault's surgical works into proper order, and thus manifested his gratitude to his friend and patron.

\* In the fourth volume of the *Journal de Chirurgie*, Bichat paid a deserved tribute of gratitude to his master and friend.

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When we consider that every part of the human body has been most minutely examined, and as minutely described, we may reasonably despair of arriving at any further knowledge on the subject. Any new view, therefore, of the structure of the frame, founded on just observations, entitles its author to the gratitude of posterity. Bichat's system of anatomy, and his mode of considering the subject, originated in his views directed to the membranous system. The observation of M. Pinel, that disease consisted of an alteration in the *tissue* of an organ, seems to have given to Bichat the idea of studying anatomy by a separate consideration of those structures which enter into the formation of the different parts. Pinel profited much by these anatomical researches, as, in a subsequent edition of his *Nosographie Philosophique*, whence the observation referred to was made, he has corrected his classification of the diseases of the fibrous, synovial, and cellular systems.

Bichat's examination of the synovial membranes led him to inquire with the same spirit into all other parts of a similar tissue, and ultimately produced his arrangement of the membranes according to their intimate organization, which must be regarded as one of the most complete systems of classification of the kind that has ever been made. Prior to the time of Bichat, the membranes had not formed any special subject of investigation; they had been examined and described in connexion with the different organs, but never independently of their association with other parts. From the days of Haller to this time, the whole of the membranes were referred to a common origin, and this was traced to the cellular membrane. Bichat saw that, however true in a general relation this arrangement might be, yet that, upon examination, it was found to be under various circumstances very erroneous. He is the first author who has ventured to treat of the subject under different points of view, and he has considered them in relation to their form, organization, vital properties, functions, and sympathies, and classed them in the following manner:—1. *Mucous membranes*. 2. *Serous membranes*. 3. *Fibrous membranes*. These are the simple membranes. Then come the compound, being either—1. *Sero-fibrous*; 2. *Sero-mucous*; or, 3. *Fibro-mucous*. There are also membranes, *contre nature*, or *accidental membranes*. The *Arachnoid* and the *Synovial* form also separate divisions from the little knowledge at present possessed of their organization. Abandoning artificial methods, Bichat had recourse to nature for the establishment of his classification, and has seen grounds for the arrangement in a conformity of structure, and a similarity in the functions of the parts embraced in these divisions. He thus divided them according to the nature of their tissues, their extent, and their uses, and

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shewed their mode of distribution, and classed them in the most ingenious manner. Their intimate structure he fully developed—he sought into their nature, the degrees of vital force possessed by them; this he demonstrated by experiments on living animals, and in this way he elucidated the diseases with which they severally may be affected. Anatomy, physiology, and pathology have been all equally advanced by the labours of Bichat, and the improvements in these departments of science during the last half century are in no little degree attributable to the researches and classifications of this able philosopher. The whole of his views on this subject have been published in a distinct treatise, entitled, *Traité des Membranes*. The first edition was published in 1800. The 2d volume of the *Mémoires de la Société Médicale d'Emulation*, of which Society he was an active and zealous member, and one of the founders, contains his early papers upon this important subject. Three other memoirs by Bichat are inserted in this work; the first on a new trepan, so arranged as to elevate or depress the crown at pleasure by means of a screw; the second, on the impossibility of any displacement occurring when the humeral extremity of the clavicle is fractured; hence the inutility of Desault's bandage: and the third, on a new manner of removing polypi by the ligature.

We must now look at Bichat as a physiologist. His proposed distribution of the two lives of an animal must be looked upon as the foundation of his labours in this department. He says, there is an *organic* life, and an *animal* life. These have their seats in the ganglions, and in the brain. The statement upon this subject will be found in his *Recherches sur la Vie et la Mort*, published in 1799. This work is divided into two parts, one containing the general exposition of his physiological views, the other demonstrating the connexion which exists between the three principal organs of life, the brain, heart, and lungs. The whole work cannot fail to excite the admiration of the reader, although he may not be prepared to admit, to the full extent, all the opinions advanced by the author on the subject of life. Bichat indeed proposed, in a second edition, making several alterations, and giving to the whole a greater degree of precision. He demonstrated the connexion of life with respiration, and showed that black as well as red blood was capable of exciting the contractions of the left cavities of the heart, and he showed that the red blood only was calculated to produce the necessary changes in the tissue of organs for the maintenance of life.

The *Traité des Membranes*, and the *Recherches Physiologiques sur la Vie et la Mort*, rendered an entirely new system of anatomy necessary, and this extraordinary work was effected in the *Anatomie Générale*. Bichat

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arranged the various organs of the body as comprised in twenty-one different tissues:—1. *the cellular system*; 2. *the nervous system of the animal functions*; 3. *the nervous system of the organic functions*; 4. *the arterial*; 5. *the venous*; 6. *the exhalent*; 7. *the absorbent*; 8. *the osseous*; 9. *the medullary*; 10. *the cartilaginous*; 11. *the fibrous*; 12. *the fibro-cartilaginous*; 13, 14. *the muscular of the animal and the organic functions*; 15. *the mucous*; 16. *the serous*; 17. *the synovial*; 18. *the system of the secreting glands*; 19. *the dermoid*; 20. *the epidermoid*; 21. *the pilous system*. Of these he made two classes: 1. the common or generating systems distributed throughout the body, and entering into the composition of the other tissues; and, 2. the organic tissues found only in certain and determinate situations, and never contributing to the organization of each other, or of the general tissues. Of the former are, the cellular, arterial, venous, exhalent, absorbent, and nervous; and of the latter, the osseous, cartilaginous, fibrous, and muscular systems. Although this arrangement cannot be looked upon as perfect, or free from objection, it is not a little remarkable, that no system since offered, although formed principally on the basis of that of Bichat, has been well received by anatomists and physiologists.

This great undertaking is said to have been composed in the course of one year, (printed chapter by chapter as it was written,) a circumstance almost incredible, when the other labours of Bichat in teaching, dissecting, &c. are considered. A system of descriptive anatomy (*Traité d'Anatomie Descriptive*) followed. The first two volumes were published by Bichat; the remaining three volumes were left imperfect, but have been completed and published by Buisson and Roux. Then an edition of the works of Desault, with many additions by the editor. He was also engaged in preparing a system of pathological anatomy, founded upon his experiments on living animals, containing researches of the deepest interest and the greatest ingenuity.

Bichat was appointed physician to the Hôtel Dieu in 1800, the duties of which were considerable. He did not, however, allow them to interfere with his other engagements, nor did he show any neglect in the performance of what was required of him at the hospital. In giving clinical instruction, he is described as pre-eminent—the pupils regarded his opinions as oracles, and treasured them up accordingly. He was indefatigable in the examination of the bodies of those who died under his care, and also of that of his colleagues. He is said to have examined upwards of six hundred bodies during one winter; and by this, his store of pathological information was greatly increased. He was able to show the correctness of his views

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relative to the independence of the tissues by investigating the diseases with which they were separately affected, and to this method much of the precision of modern pathology must unquestionably be attributed. He even contemplated a new classification of diseases. The *Materia Medica* formed also a subject of Bichat's attention. His appointment to the Hôtel Dieu enabled him to prosecute this branch of science. He felt the necessity of classing medicines, from the influence which they exercise over the vital properties; and he was desirous of demonstrating their sympathetic and direct actions upon the different organic systems. He was assisted in this important and difficult inquiry by no less than forty pupils, who, under his directions, gave daily reports upon the same, the progress of which was announced in a regular public lecture delivered daily by Bichat. Pairier, in his "*Dissertation sur les Emétiques, précédée de considérations générales sur la matière médicale,*" Paris, 1805, 8vo., and Gondret, in his "*Dissertation sur l'action des Purgatifs,*" Paris, 1803, 8vo., have given some of Bichat's views on the subject of the *materia medica* generally.

But the labours of Bichat were to be brought to a close. Death, whose nature, physically speaking, he had so well described, was now to visit him. He sustained a fall in descending a staircase at the Hôtel Dieu, from a room in which he had been for a considerable time examining preparations in maceration, and from which, of course, putrid emanations were being sent forth. He was taken up suffering under a slight concussion of the brain, and he was much bruised. He was subject to a disordered condition of the stomach and bowels; fever succeeded; his usual gastric derangement ensued; he became comatose, and died on the fourteenth day of the disease, on the 22nd of July, 1802, in the 31st year of his age. That any one should have accomplished so much, and of such a nature, so original, so vast, so practical, and, it may be added, so perfect, in such a short period of existence, is only to be attributed to the possession of genius, accompanied by the most patient and indefatigable industry. He may be said to have purchased learning at the expense of the richest soil of human happiness, and, having impaired his health, prematurely deprived society of a man whose greatest fault was, an activity of mind disproportionate to his strength.

" Upon such sacrifices  
The gods themselves throw incense."

LEAR, Act v. scene 3.

The period of his life was no doubt curtailed by his great exertions; but if the age of a man is to be estimated by what he has done, rather than the number of years that have passed over his head—and Lord Bacon tells

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us, "a man that is young in years, may be old in hours, if he have lost no time"—then Xavier Bichat had attained an extreme longevity.

"That life is long, which answers life's great end,  
The time that bears no fruit, deserves no name;  
The man of wisdom is the man of years."

YOUNG.

His works will live, though their author be no more; but his memory will ever be cherished as one of the benefactors of the human race. Deeply to deplore the death of any individual occurring in the meridian of life, and in the midst of his sphere of usefulness, is, perhaps, a just as it is a natural consequence of such an event; but how much is the intensity of this feeling increased, when the subject of it is one by whose exertions mankind have been so greatly benefited. Bichat fell a victim to his zeal for science and his profession, and died in the height of his prosperity and reputation. No one was ever more sincerely mourned; his loss was a national one, and such it was felt to be. Corvisart communicated the intelligence of the death of Bichat to the first consul, Napoleon Buonaparte, in the following words: "Bichat vient de mourir sur un champ de bataille qui compte aussi plus d'une victime: personne en si peu de temps n'a fait tant de choses et aussi bien." Ten days after this, the government caused his name to be inscribed, together with that of Desault, on a memorial erected at the Hôtel Dieu in honour of these most distinguished men. The following is the inscription:

"Ce Marbre dédié à la Mémoire des Citoyens DESAULT et BICHAT a été posé pour attester la reconnaissance de leur contemporains, pour les services qu'ils ont rendus, le premier à la Chirurgie Française dont il est le restaurateur, le second à la Médecine qu'il a enrichée de plusieurs ouvrages utiles, et dont il eût aggrandi le domaine si l'impitoyable mort ne l'eût frappé dans sa 31 année."

More than five hundred students followed Bichat's remains to the tomb, and M. Le Preux pronounced a discourse at his interment.

The life of Bichat has been written by Buisson and by Husson. An historical notice has also been published by Sc. Pinel. Hallé delivered an *Eloge* before the Faculty of Medicine of Paris; and Sue, at the commencement of his course of Medical Bibliography.

In all the relations of life, Bichat was most amiable. He was a stranger to envy, or any other hateful passion. Modest in his demeanour, but lively in his manners, which were open and free. He was much beloved. To his

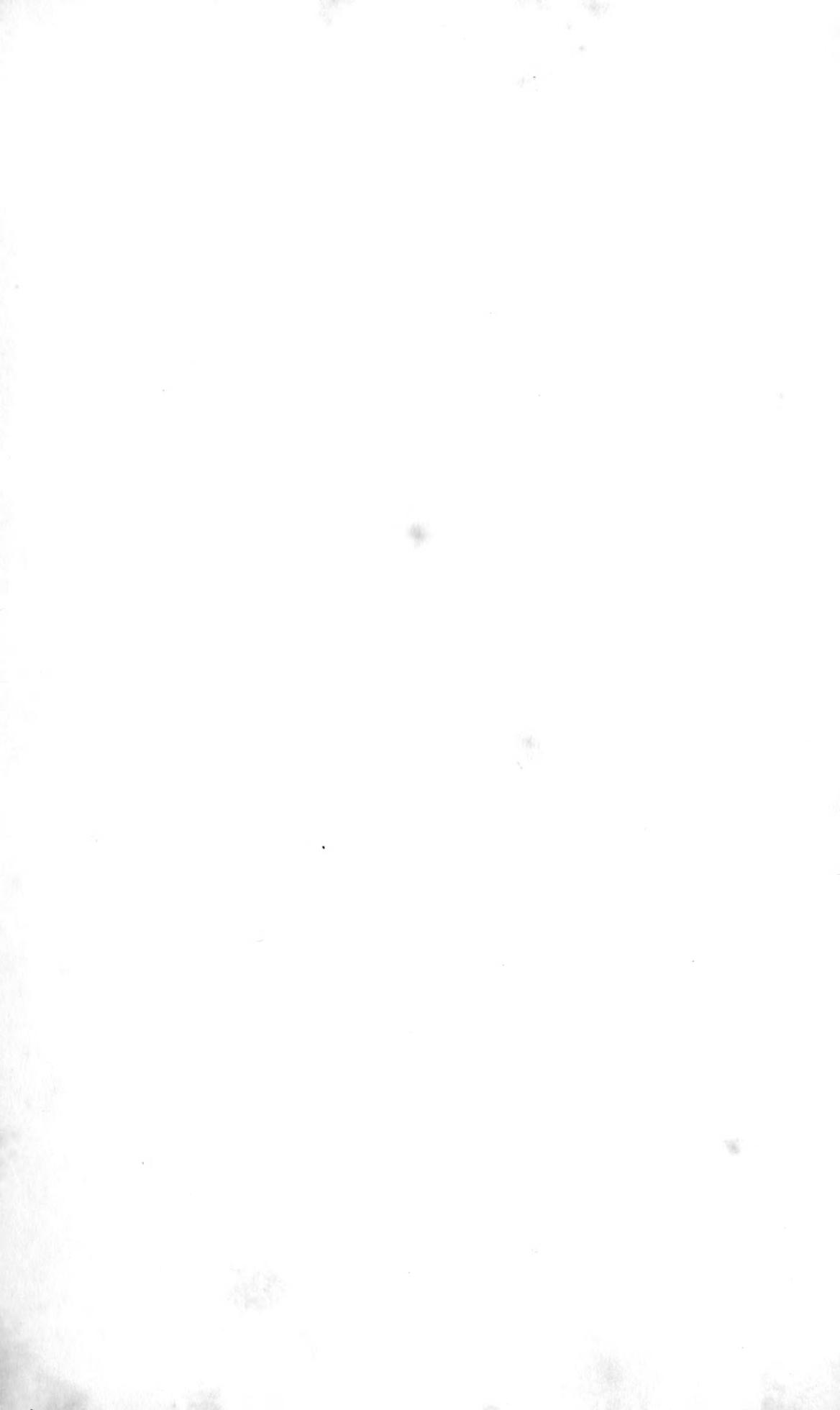
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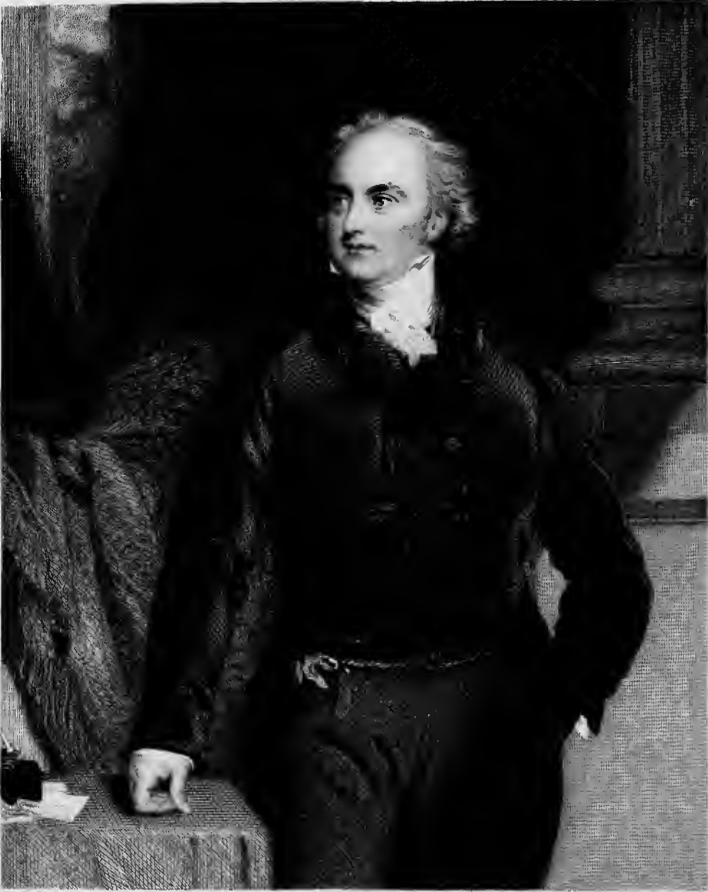
father he was most devotedly attached, and to him his work is dedicated in the following simple but expressive manner: "*A mon Père et mon meilleur Ami.*" He was of middling stature, and his countenance was agreeable; his eyes were piercing and expressive. The portraits of him generally fail of giving a precise resemblance; that which accompanies this memoir is admitted, by all who knew him, to be the best likeness, and in every point satisfactory.

His head was very remarkable, and Cloquet (*Traité d'Anatomie*, tom. i. p. 82, planche xxix.) has given a representation of his skull, as a specimen of the Caucasian variety of the human race. It is singularly irregular as to its formation, the left side projecting much beyond that of the opposite. The sutures are also irregular, and the defect of symmetry is as evident in the interior as it is on the exterior of the skull. The forehead is particularly large and capacious.

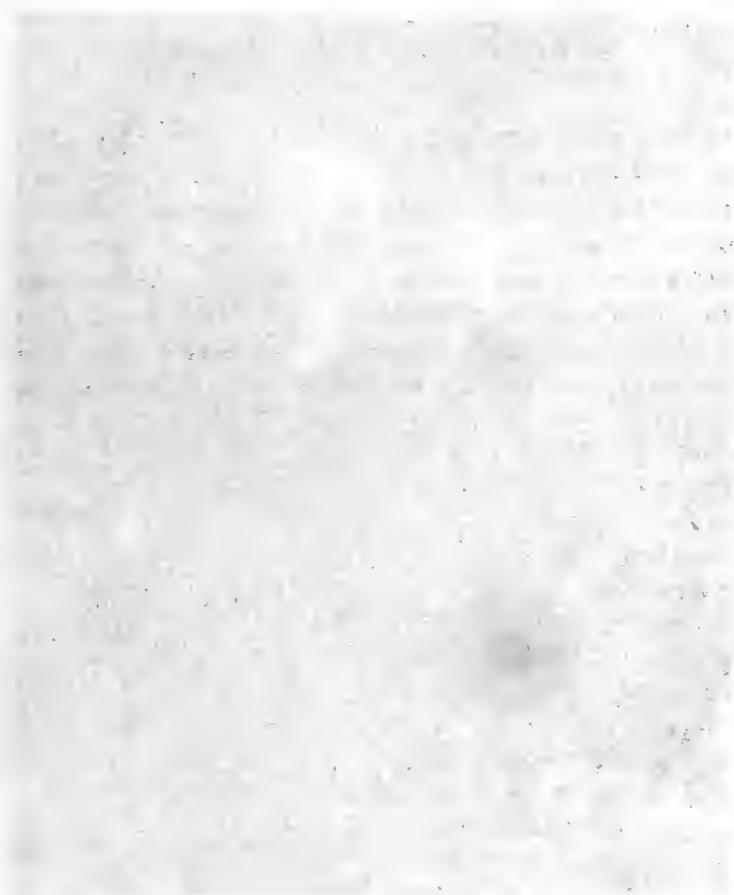
It is scarcely necessary to remark, that the works of Bichat have been translated into various languages, and have gone through many editions. They may be arranged in the following order:

1. Notice Historique sur Desault, Paris, 1795, 8vo.
2. Description d'un nouveau Trepan, Paris, 1799, 8vo., in the *Mem. de la Soc. Med. d'Emulation*, tom. ii. p. 277.
3. Mémoire sur la Fracture de l'extrémité scapulaire de la Clavicule. *Ibid.* p. 309.
4. Description d'un procédé nouveau pour la ligature des polypes. *Ibid.* p. 339.
5. Mémoire sur la membrane synoviale des articulations. *Ibid.* p. 350.
6. Dissertation sur les Membranes, et sur leurs rapports généraux d'organisation. *Ibid.* p. 371.
7. Mémoire sur les rapports qui existent entre les organes à forme symétrique et sur ceux à forme irrégulière. *Ibid.* p. 477.
8. *Traité des Membranes en général, et de diverses membranes en particulier*, Paris, 1800, 8vo.
9. *Recherches Physiologiques sur la Vie et la Mort*, Paris, 1800, 8vo.
10. *Anatomie Générale, appliquée à la Physiologie et à la Médecine*, Paris, 1801, 2 tom. 8vo.—1812, 4 tom. 8vo. Beclard published additions to this work in 1821.
11. *Traité d'Anatomie Descriptive*, Paris, 1801, 2 tom. 8vo. Completed by Buisson and Roux, in 5 vols 8vo.
12. *Pathological Anatomy: the last course*, from an autograph MS. of P. A. Beclard, 8vo.
13. *Œuvres Chirurgicales de P. J. Desault*, Paris, 1812, 3 tom. 8vo.





Arthur MacDonalder





# SIR ASTLEY PASTON COOPER, BART.

G. C. H. D. C. L. F. R. S.

SERJEANT-SURGEON TO THE QUEEN.

“ A life well spent, whose early care it was  
His riper years should not upbraid his green ;  
By unperceived degrees he wears away ;  
Yet, like the sun, seems larger at his setting.”

BLAIR.

WAS surgery an art antecedent to medicine? is a question that has been frequently discussed. In the primeval ages of the world—when mankind lived in a state of nature, when exercise in the open air gave a relish to the enjoyment of simple food—robust and vigorous constitutions, and a proportionate absence of disease, must have been the result. One may easily suppose that the functions of the body would go on unimpaired by disease, and that life would at length become extinct only by a gradual and entire decay. But as no exemption to the consequences of accidental violence could be afforded, and, as in cases of wounds, where the cause and effect would be obvious to the external senses, and where the pain must have been both immediate and violent, there can be no doubt that aid would be instantly sought for. From these and other circumstances, it appears that surgery must be regarded as the primary, the most ancient branch of medicine. We have not, however, any authentic accounts of the mode of treatment in the first ages of the world, further than that they used to wash the wounded parts with warm water, to suck them clean, and to apply the juice of vegetables pounded, or steeped in wine, or water, oils, resin, the bark and roots of certain trees, and bandages. Eurypylyus when wounded with an arrow, addresses Patroclus :

“ But thou, Patroclus, act a friendly part,  
Lead to my ships, and draw this deadly dart ;  
With lukewarm water wash this gore away,  
With healing balms the raging smart allay,  
Such as sage Chiron, sire of pharmacy,  
Once taught Achilles, and Achilles thee.”

*Iliad*, lib. iv. v. 218.

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When Menelaus was wounded in the side by an arrow, Machaon, the son of the Grecian Æsculapius, after washing the wound, and sucking out the blood, applied a dressing to appease the pain, of the juice of roots bruised, the principal remedy then known. So again in the Iliad we read :

“ Then suck'd the blood, and sov'reign balm infus'd,  
Which Chiron gave, and Æsculapius used.”

Considering the frequency of quarrels and bloody battles, which convulsed mankind in the most early periods of time, it has been well remarked, that one would expect to have seen surgery more progressive, from the experience which might have resulted, in consequence of the situation of the wounded and prisoners; but in these primeval times, when mankind were less civilized, and more weakly connected by the mutual obligations and ties of society, very little attention was given to captives, who were considered as the slaves of the conquerors. The mode of making war, too, among the ancients, was no less inhuman than fatal. The experience, however, which accidents or wars could afford, must have been very slow, for want of the collateral knowledge of anatomy, upon which the progress and improvement of surgery most essentially depends. In modern times it is not possible, perhaps, to name any one who has more powerfully contributed to the improvement of his science by the application of sound anatomical knowledge, than the respected individual whose name stands at the head of the present memoir. No one has reached a higher position in the profession, or maintained that distinction for so long a period.

The father of SIR ASTLEY PASTON COOPER was the Rev. Dr. Samuel Cooper, of Yarmouth, in the county of Norfolk. His mother, Maria-Susanna, sprung from the family of the Pastons, but was daughter of James Bransby, Esq. of Shottisham, in the same county, and known as the authoress of a novel called “ The Exemplary Mother.” Sir Astley is the fourth son of these parents, and was born at Brooke in Norfolk, August 23d, 1768. It is from the most laudable motives that we feel an anxiety to learn of the early life and dispositions of those who, by their talents and zeal, have proved themselves benefactors to science and mankind, for true it is, that,

“ ———— The childhood shows the man,  
As morning shows the day.” MILTON.

In his boyhood, Sir Astley is said to have shown a bold and enterprising spirit; to have been remarkable for his social and friendly disposition, and for the animation with which he would enter into the sports of his juvenile companions. The village schoolmaster, Robert Larke, gave to him the

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rudiments of his education in reading, writing, and arithmetic; but his classical knowledge was derived from the instruction of his father, a good scholar, and the Rev. Joseph Harrison. Many anecdotes have been related demonstrative of his intrepidity and enterprise, qualities for which his professional labours have been particularly distinguished.

Having received part of my professional education at the Borough hospitals, I am competent to speak to this point, from having witnessed, during several of Sir Astley's earlier years, the chief of the operations performed by him at Guy's Hospital. I can never forget the enthusiasm with which he entered upon the performance of any duty calculated to abridge human suffering. This enthusiasm, by the generosity of his character, his familiar manner, and the excellence of his temper, he imparted to all around him—the pupils imbibed the same spirit; and the extent of the obligations of the present and of after ages to Sir Astley Cooper, in thus forming able and spirited surgeons, can never be accurately estimated. He was the idol of the Borough school—the pupils followed him in troops, and, like to Linnæus, who has been described as proceeding upon his botanical excursions accompanied by hundreds of students, so may Sir Astley be depicted traversing the wards of the hospital with an equal number of pupils, listening with almost breathless anxiety to catch the observations which fell from his lips upon the several cases presented to his view. But, on the days of operation, this feeling was wound up to the highest pitch—the sight was altogether deeply interesting; the large theatre of Guy's crowded to the ceiling—the profound silence obtained upon his entry—that person so manly and so truly imposing—and the awful feeling connected with the occasion—can never be forgotten by any of his pupils. The elegance of his operation—without the slightest affectation—all ease—all kindness to the patient, and equally solicitous that nothing should be hidden from the observation of the pupils—rapid in execution—masterly in manner—no hurry—no disorder—the most trifling minutiae attended to—the dressings generally applied by his own hand. The light and elegant manner in which Sir Astley employed his various instruments always astonished me, and I could not refrain from making some remarks upon it to my late master, Mr. Chandler, one of the surgeons to St. Thomas's Hospital. I observed to him, that Sir Astley's operations appeared like the graceful efforts of an artist in making a drawing. Mr. C. replied, "Sir, it is of no consequence what instrument Mr. Cooper uses, they are all alike to him; and I verily believe, he could operate as easily with an oyster knife, as the best bit of cutlery in Laundry's shop." There was great truth in this observation. Sir Astley was, at that time, decidedly one of the first operators

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of the day, and this must be taken in its widest sense, for it is intended to include the planning of the operation, the precision and dexterity in the mode of its performance, and the readiness with which all difficulties were met and overcome.

From this digression, naturally occasioned by allusion to the intrepidity of Sir Astley in his youth, let us return to the course of his study. Having imbibed some portion of classical instruction, he was placed, at the age of fifteen, with Mr. Turner, a surgeon and apothecary, at Yarmouth, and in this manner he was introduced into that profession of which he was to become the brightest ornament. Having been a few months in this confined sphere, he came to London, and was bound apprentice to his uncle, Mr. William Cooper, one of the surgeons of Guy's Hospital; but with him he remained only three months, being then transferred, by his own desire, to Mr. Cline, the eminent surgeon of St. Thomas's Hospital. This connexion gave full scope for the display of his character, and afforded him every opportunity that could be given for obtaining information, directed by the guidance of a master distinguished by a truly philosophical mind and spirit, and of whom Sir Astley has always spoken in terms of the most profound veneration and regard for his private worth, and with the greatest respect for his knowledge, judgment, and ability as a surgeon. Sir Astley's labours in the dissecting-room were incessant—his attention at the hospital—his examination of accidents not less unremitting: and by this continual observation, united to his sound anatomical information, may be attributed the superiority he has justly acquired in forming a diagnosis upon the nature of accidents or disease.

In 1787, Sir Astley visited Edinburgh for a short time, and distinguished himself at the Royal Medical Society, though he had not yet reached twenty years of age. Upon his return to London, his master, Mr. Cline, who was the teacher of anatomy, physiology, and surgery at St. Thomas's Hospital, appointed him his demonstrator of anatomy, and soon after gave to him a part of the anatomical lectures. Sir Astley also gained Mr. Cline's consent, and that of the other surgeons of St. Thomas's and Guy's Hospital, to give a course of lectures on the principles and practice of surgery, which had previously only formed a part of the anatomical course, and these lectures were really the foundation of his fame and fortune. His class at first consisted of fifty students, but they increased to 400, which was by far the largest ever known in London, and he gave a share of these lectures to Mr. Travers, Mr. Henry Cline, and to Mr. Joseph H. Green, consecutively. A little practice soon rendered him a popular teacher. He made no attempts at oratory; but laboured to render the subject as plain and

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intelligible as possible to his hearers—he did not distract them by the introduction of controversial subjects connected with physiological science.

His apprenticeship ceased in 1791, the year he commenced as a lecturer; and at the close of it, he married the daughter of Thomas Cock, Esq., of Tottenham, a distant relation of Mr. Cline: and to show how solicitous he was, never to neglect the performance of any public professional duty, it may be told, that on the evening of the day on which the marriage ceremony was performed, he delivered his customary lecture, without any knowledge of what had happened being communicated to his class.

In the year 1792 he went to Paris, and attended the lectures of Desault at the Hôtel Dieu, and those also of Chopart. The former of these was an excellent practical surgeon, and a man of acute mind; and Sir A. C. gained from him much of his knowledge of injuries of the head, which were at that time by far too frequently the subjects of surgical operations in London. He has often mentioned an anecdote of Desault, to show his acuteness and loyal spirit. A boy came before him at his clinical lecture, complaining that his right arm was paralytic. Desault suspected the truth of his story, and said, "Otez votre chapeau:" the boy, forgetting his paralytic story, immediately raised his arm and took off his hat. "Donnez moi un baton," said Desault; and he beat the boy unmercifully, and said, "D'où venez vous?" the boy replied, "du Fauxbourg de St. Antoine." "Oui, je le crois," said Desault, "tous les coquins viennent de ce quartier-la." It is hardly necessary to say, that the mobs of Paris sprung from the Fauxbourg St. Antoine. Sir A. C. states, that Desault gave lectures in anatomy, and admirable clinical lectures; he was very attentive to his duties in the hospital, and had a very large share of private practice. Chopart he considered to have been a very inferior man to Desault, and little acquainted with the first principles of his profession.

On the 10th of August, 1792, Sir Astley Cooper was attending an operation at Chopart's Hospital, when the fire of cannon announced the attack upon the château of the Tuilleries, and he immediately ran upon the Pont Neuf, whence he could see the Swiss guards firing from the windows on the people below. As his lodging was near the Place Victoire, he had to go through the streets near the Palais Royal, when the scene became of the most extraordinary description. The cannon was still roaring—muskets firing—the tocsin sounding—litters with the dead and dying carried through the streets—the women crying for the loss of their relatives, and from apprehensions—and bodies of men armed with pikes were carrying either the heads or some parts of the bodies of the Swiss they had killed, as

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trophies of their victory. On the following day he saw the king and queen go to the Temple, which they only quitted for their execution. Sir A. C. several times heard Brissot, Vergniaud, Gaudet, Marat, and Robespierre address the Legislative Assembly, and was once at the Jacobin Club. He saw two persons, a marquis and a priest, guillotined for forging assignats. In later days, instead of wasting his time in the summer months upon our coast, he has frequently visited the continent, and he became intimately acquainted with Dupuytren, who had the kindness to give him admission to the dead-house of the Hôtel Dieu, that he might pursue the objects which he had in view by the inspection of any cadâvres he chose. Sir A. C. considered Dupuytren as an excellent practical surgeon, as a sensible man, as an admirable clinical lecturer, and as the best of fathers, for he idolized his daughter, and she was most affectionately attached to him. Dupuytren introduced Sir A. C. to Louis Philippe, then Duke of Orleans, who afterwards gave him the Cross of the Legion of Honour, and soon afterwards he was made an honorary member of the National Institute.

In the year 1792 he commenced practice, and took up his residence in Jeffrey's-square, St. Mary Axe, where he dwelt for six years; after which, he removed to New Broad-street, Bishopsgate, and remained there until 1815, when he came to the West end of the town. The popularity he enjoyed as a surgeon, and the extent of his practice, has been greater than that of any of his predecessors, or those who have succeeded him. He has most honourably and justly realised a large fortune by distinguished merit and most laborious application. During a long practice, he never omitted to deliver his regular lectures, and the detail of his daily labours is a matter almost past belief. Sir Astley was always, and still is, an early riser, and the first hours of the day were devoted to the making of dissections, arranging of preparations; and patients in his neighbourhood were frequently visited before the hour of breakfast, which usually occupied but a few minutes. Patients applying at his residence for advice, were then seen until one o'clock; after which, the hospital was visited, a lecture on anatomy and physiology delivered, operations performed, &c.; the patients visited at their own homes until seven o'clock, at which hour, or frequently later, a frugal dinner was taken, with a very limited quantity of wine, for Sir Astley has been remarkable for his temperance. After dinner, a repose for a quarter or half an hour; and then again, twice a week to lecture on surgery, and to visit patients until midnight. I witnessed this course for a very long period, and it is incredible how such great exertions could be sustained for such a period of time. As a lecturer, Sir Astley was remarkable for his spirit and animation. However serious his humour might

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chance to be, from the pressure of professional avocations, and the deep and awful responsibility with which he was affected on every side, the assumption of his place in the lecture theatre seemed to throw new life into him, to impart a vigour to his frame, and to give full scope to his professional enthusiasm. No lecturer ever commanded greater attention from his pupils, and no one, most certainly, was ever more deserving of such attention.

In the course of his practice, Sir Astley has met with many remarkable circumstances, and he now equally delights and amuses his friendly circle with the narrative of them. He received, perhaps, the largest fee ever at that time given for an operation; it was upon an old gentleman of the name of Hyatt, who was a resident in the West Indies, and when arrived at the age of seventy, being afflicted with stone in the bladder, determined upon coming over to England to undergo the operation for its removal. He selected Sir Astley for the occasion. It was performed with his accustomed ability; and upon visiting him one day, when able to quit his bed, he observed to his surgeon, that he had *fee'd* his physicians, but that he had not yet remunerated his surgeon. He desired to know the amount of his debt; and Sir Astley stated, "two hundred guineas." "Pooh, pooh!" exclaimed the old gentleman, "I shan't give you two hundred guineas—there—that is what I shall give you," tossing off his night-cap, and throwing it to Sir Astley. "Thank you, sir," said Sir A. "any thing from you is acceptable," and he put the cap into his pocket. Upon examination, it was found to contain a cheque for one thousand guineas. One other anecdote must be related, as it is singularly illustrative of character. Mr. Steer consulted Sir A. at his own residence, and, having received his advice, departed without giving the usual fee. Sir Astley took no notice of this, but gave his assistance to him cheerfully, under a belief that he was a gentleman who had seen better days, and was now in indifferent circumstances. Shortly after, however, Sir Astley received a note, acquainting him, that on going to the Stock Exchange, he found he had some omnium which he had not disposed of, and that he had taken the liberty of putting £3,000 of it in his name; and finding that it had soon after risen, he took the further liberty of selling it for him, and now sent him the difference, which was, £63. 10s.—Sir Astley's annual receipt of fees far exceeds that of any other member of the profession. In one year he received no less a sum than £21,000, and for many years from £15,000 and upwards. His patients have comprised all classes of society, and his attention was equally bestowed on the wealthy and the indigent.

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He was appointed surgeon to George IV., and in the year 1827 made serjeant-surgeon. He attended William IV. when he was First Lord of the Admiralty; and the Earl of Munster, when he had a severe compound fracture of his leg; and at the request of the Duke of Wellington, was made Grand Cross of the Guelphic Order.

In 1821 Sir Astley was created a Baronet, with remainder, in default of male issue, to Astley Paston, the fourth son of his second brother, the Rev. Samuel Lovick Cooper, rector of Ingoldsthorpe and Barton, Norfolk. By his marriage with Miss Cock, Sir Astley had only one daughter, who died at the early age of two years. Lady Cooper died in June 1827; and in July 1828, Sir Astley again entered the married state with Catherine, daughter of John Jones, Esq. of Derry Ormond, Cardiganshire.

Sir Astley Cooper, when most engaged in lectures and the practice of his profession, always made it a rule to enter in his case-book all the interesting operations and cases which he witnessed, and these books he has regularly preserved from 1800, and occasionally some prior to that period, as far back as 1784.

He commenced as a lecturer at St. Thomas's Hospital in 1791, and continued to lecture until 1826. He also delivered a course of lectures on comparative anatomy, at the Royal College of Surgeons, of which he is a member of the council, and of the board of examiners, and was elected President for the years 1826 and 1837. In addition to many honours already mentioned, numerous foreign academies, and almost all the scientific institutions of this country, have been eager to enroll his name among their members; the Royal Institute of Paris, of the Netherlands, &c. The University of Oxford has conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Civil Law.

The works of Sir Astley Cooper, to which attention must now be directed, are written without pretension to elegance; they are directed only to the statement of facts, and are indeed not brought forward with any view to the support of a preconceived theory; they are the unbiassed relation and results of a very long and extended experience, and they abound with sound practical observations. It is much to the credit of Sir Astley Cooper, that his works, although costly, have been published at a low price. The expense of engravings, particularly when coloured, must always be great; and it is due to Sir Astley to say, that his object in publishing has not been pecuniary advantage. He has been actuated by a higher motive, and this may be given in his own words.

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“ After having been for forty years placed in a situation of ample opportunity—after having been fostered by the profession and the public, infinitely beyond my deserts—I feel that I only perform my duty in giving to my medical brethren, without any sordid views, the result of my experience.”

1. In a volume of “ Medical Researches, selected from the papers of a Private Medical Association,” published in 1798, Sir A. Cooper has two contributions. The first is a case of strangulated hernia, in which a part of the abdominal viscera was protruded into the left cavity of the chest, and death thereby produced. Such a condition of parts could only be ascertained by inspection after death; and the record of it, as an unusual occurrence, resulting from original malformation, is not without its value. The subject of it was brought into the anatomical theatre of St. Thomas’s Hospital for dissection; and the particular history is therefore not well known. The viscera were very much displaced from their natural situation, and the great arch of the colon, and a large portion of the omentum, were pushed through an aperture in the diaphragm into the cavity of the chest. Had the existence of such a state been known during life, no possible means of relief could have been afforded.

2. The second contribution to the “ Medical Researches,” is more singular than the preceding one. It details *three* instances of “Obstruction of the Thoracic Duct;” that channel by which our nutriment must take its course into the circulating system. The protecting power of nature, the care taken to continue the existence of the individual, is most strongly marked in these cases. In the *first*, a scrofulous disease of the valves near to the receptaculum chyli, was found to be present, and prevented the free injection of quicksilver into the vessel. By what means the body was nourished in this case, could not be ascertained, the dissection of the body having proceeded too far to admit of this inquiry, previous to the morbid condition being observed. In the *second* case, however, the contrivance of nature became apparent. The thoracic duct was being injected, and a portion of the wax by force escaped from a divided absorbent, belonging to a cluster of vessels under the left crus of the diaphragm. Quicksilver being poured into this absorbent, it entered into a large vessel, which passed half way up the chest on the left side of the aorta, crossed the spine behind that vessel, and then terminated in the thoracic duct, which became readily filled with the injection from the part diseased, to that at which it opens into the vein. It was ascertained that the obstruction arose from a small fungous substance, of a scrofulous nature, and that one half only of the duct was capable of performing its function. The continuance of life was secured by anastomosing absorbents, which performed the office of the duct,

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and conveyed the chyle and lymph into the blood. The *third* case was of a man admitted into St. Thomas's Hospital, for a fungoid testis. Upon examination, he was found to have a tumour on the lumbar vertebræ, formed by the enlarged absorbent glands, of the enormous weight of  $9\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. The thoracic duct was thickened and opaque, resembling rather a nerve than an absorbent vessel; the commencement of it, the receptaculum chyli, was filled with a pulpy matter, and this extended into the duct, which was lost in a swelling of the size of a walnut, opposite to the curvature of the aorta.\* Above this enlargement the duct appeared as usual, and terminated in the veins. Sir Astley then believed this disease to be truly cancerous in its nature. In this case the duct was obliterated two-thirds of its course; this was ascertained by injection, and the matter injected was found to pass from the receptaculum chyli, through several vessels behind the aorta into a large trunk, which passed the whole length of the chest on the left side of the spine.

“ Through this vessel the injection flowed to the first dorsal vertebra, and then entered the thoracic duct, which being above the part at which the vessel was diseased, there was no further interruption to its passage into the jugular vein. From the side of this trunk several small vessels arose, and having passed behind the aorta, entered the undiseased part of the duct near to the tumour. In this case, then, as well as the former, the obstruction was prevented from producing fatal consequences, by the anastomosing vessels on the left side of the spine, having performed the office of the thoracic duct.”

These collateral vessels may be found in subjects where the duct is healthy, as Sir Astley has shown by some injections, and he has thus verified a remark of Mr. Cline's, as to the probability of these vessels forming the new absorbent channels, in cases of obstructed thoracic duct. It will be evident from this, that the absorbent, like to the arterial system, has the power of accommodating itself to circumstances, and creating a condition of parts capable of carrying on the necessary functions under apparently the most unfavourable circumstances. These cases stimulated Sir Astley to make some experiments, and he is the first, I believe, who succeeded in tying the thoracic duct. Dr. Monro had attempted it, and failed, and I am not aware of its having been successfully performed by any one prior to Sir A. Cooper. These experiments are detailed in the paper just mentioned, and they prove that when the extremity of the thoracic duct is suddenly obstructed, the duct and receptaculum chyli burst and extravasate the chyle and lymph; absorption is, therefore, no longer continued, and the consequences are fatal to the animal. They prove also the contractile

\* This preparation is in the Museum of St. Thomas's Hospital.

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powers of the absorbents, even to a degree capable of rupturing their coats; and, they also prove, that the absorbent vessels do not frequently terminate in veins, as formerly was supposed by many anatomists, though an instance of this kind has been narrated to me by Sir Astley, and it occurred in one of the groins of the body of a Lascar. This is, however, to be looked upon as an exception to the general rule.

3. In the *Philosophical Transactions* for the year 1800, (part i. p. 151,) Sir Astley Cooper has a paper entitled, "Observations on the Effects which take place from the destruction of the *Membrana Tympani* of the Ear." Many experiments had been made by anatomists, with the view of ascertaining the effects produced by a perforation of the *membrana tympani*; but as these had been made upon quadrupeds, little information was thereby obtained. Mr. Cheselden had contemplated performing the experiment upon the human subject, and a condemned criminal was selected for the operation; but an outcry was raised, and the intention was abandoned. Disease, however, of this part, points out the effects produced by an opening in the membrane. It is distinctly ascertained, that the membranes of both ears may have large apertures in them, and the powers of hearing be very little impaired.

4. In the *Philosophical Transactions* for 1801, (p. 435,) Sir Astley submitted some farther Observations on the subject, and gave an "Account of an Operation for the Removal of a particular species of Deafness." The operation proposed is that of puncturing the membrane in cases where deafness is found to proceed from an obstruction of the Eustachian tube, or, in other words, the passage from the throat to the internal ear. Several cases in which this operation had been performed, are detailed; but it is due to Sir Astley to say, that he has had the candour to admit the disappointment he has experienced upon this subject. Deafness from a closed Eustachian tube is rare: the relief obtained has been generally only temporary, the opening made into the tympanum often closes, and deafness returns: a constitutional as well as a local treatment is therefore required. The president and council of the Royal Society awarded to Sir Astley the Copley medal for these papers.

5. The principal work by which Sir Astley Cooper became known to the profession as an author, and by which his fame has been established, is that upon *Hernia*, or *Rupture*. No disease demands a more accurate knowledge of anatomy, or requires more minute dissection, for the understanding of its pathology. The changes which take place in the relative situation of parts, the alterations the structures undergo, and their vital importance, renders this disease a matter of most serious moment to the surgeon. The

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anatomy of the parts concerned in cases of hernia had been, with the exception of the masterly production of Gimbernat, a Spanish surgeon, almost neglected; and it is due to Sir Astley Cooper, to assign to him the merit of drawing the attention of the English surgeon more particularly to the important subject of hernia. Albinus had previously demonstrated the oblique passage of the spermatic cord through the abdominal parietes, but he had no idea of the upper ring, or of the inguinal canal, for a knowledge of which we are decidedly indebted to Sir Astley. Mr. Lawrence, whose authority upon this subject will be considered as most satisfactory, states, that "no complete description and accurate delineation of even the common kinds of hernia, as the inguinal, femoral, and umbilical, existed previously to the late excellent works of Camper, (published by S. T. Söemmering after the author's death,) Cooper, Scarpa, Hesselbach, Cloquet, and Langenbeck."

The first part of Sir Astley's work is confined to the "Anatomy and Surgical Treatment of Inguinal and Congenital Hernia," published in 1804; the second, published in 1807, to that of "Crural and Umbilical Hernia," &c. A second edition was published in 1827, with notes by Mr. Key. The varieties of hernia, and the modes necessary for the reduction of the several kinds, are only to be ascertained by a thorough knowledge of the anatomy of the parts concerned. Upon this point, the information contained in Sir Astley's book is precise and complete. He has well described the manner in which the hernial sac is formed, the mode in which it descends, and the several fasciæ constituting its coverings. The varieties to which it is occasionally subjected are not neglected by our author, and the causes likely to produce the displacement are ably enumerated. The remedial measures are fully detailed, and the mode of application of trusses dwelt upon with considerable ingenuity and precision. Too much carelessness upon this head prevails, even at the present day, notwithstanding the observations of Sir Astley Cooper, Mr. Lawrence, and others, who may justly be considered as our best authorities upon the subject. The practice of one of the largest hospitals in this metropolis, for a great number of years, (for Sir Astley was surgeon of Guy's from 1800 to 1826, and, since that period, consulting surgeon,) has given to Sir Astley extensive experience in the treatment of strangulated hernia. No surgeon, of modern times, has perhaps operated so frequently or so successfully, and this has arisen, in part, from a due regard to the instructions of his celebrated master, to whom the work is very appropriately dedicated, (the late Mr. Cline,) as to the danger of delay in operating upon cases of this description. *Mora non tuta—mora damnosa.* To estimate the value of Sir Astley's work, it must

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be carefully read; it is impossible to condense the subject in a manner adapted to these pages; but it may be safely said, that there is no one point in relation to hernia or its treatment, under all its varieties and conditions, which is not satisfactorily treated of in this publication. The description of fasciæ may, perhaps, by some be considered as too minute; dissections of this nature are extremely difficult, and often unsatisfactory, for it is not easy to trace fasciæ; and one evil resulting from this difficulty is, that the subject thereby appears really to be more complicated and obscure than in reality, upon operation on the living subject, it is found to be. I must, however, guard against any misconstruction upon this head, for I would not be understood to undervalue the researches of Sir Astley, or the perspicuous manner in which he has described the transverse fascia. The *transverse* fascia is of vital importance in obtaining a correct knowledge of inguinal hernia, and the mode in which the upper abdominal ring is formed; and it was never known until Sir Astley pointed it out, and demonstrated its relations. The discovery of this fascia may justly be considered as the most important addition made by Sir Astley to anatomical science. It is admitted to be so by all the best writers on the anatomy and surgery of hernia—Langenbach, Cloquet, Lawrence, S. Cooper, B. Cooper, Colles, Quain, &c. The *upper ring*, and the *inguinal canal*, (before unknown,) are formed by this structure, a precise acquaintance with which, is of the greatest consequence in the treatment of inguinal hernia, and without which it is impossible satisfactorily to understand it. Mr. Lawrence, admitting the discovery of the fascia transversalis to be entirely and exclusively due to the accurate anatomical investigations and patient research of Sir A. Cooper, suggests that it ought to be designated by the name of the discoverer. The manner also in which the femoral hernia is enclosed in a double sac, was *first* described by Sir A., and upon this is founded the knowledge we entertain of the proper method of applying the taxis, and reducing this common form of hernia in females. All the difficulty which has occurred in the operation for femoral hernia, has arisen from its not being understood that it was contained in two bags; the first formed of what Sir A. calls the fascia propria, or crural sheath, elongated so as to form a sac; and, secondly, the peritoneal bag, which is included in the former covering. When the fascia propria is opened, the intestine is supposed to be laid bare; but it is only the fat, and peritoneal bag, which are exposed, and which sac afterwards requires to be opened with the greatest care, as there is little fluid in it in the femoral hernia.

Sir Astley may also lay claim to the discovery of the mode of formation of the crural sheath, which receives the femoral artery, vein and absorbent

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vessels, with two septa separating the artery from the vein, and the vein from the absorbents. The forepart of this sheath, formed by the fascia transversalis, and its posterior part by the fascia iliaca. Gimbernat's ligament is placed between the sheath and the pubes; the anterior crural nerve upon the outer part of the sheath, Poupart's ligament before it, the psoas and iliacus muscles behind it.

As the epigastric artery, in inguinal hernia is in one species on the inner, and in the other on the outer side of the mouth of the sac, Sir Astley Cooper advised cutting upwards in inguinal hernia; and as the epigastric artery is placed on the outer part of the femoral hernia, he recommended the scratching the edge of the stricture with the knife, in the direction towards the umbilicus, which will be sure to avoid that artery or any other, if the fibres of the stricture are only slightly touched with the knife, and then further divided by pressure with the finger or the director.

The superficial fascia, which is an expansion of condensed fibrous structure, was described by Camper, but much more fully by Sir A. Cooper. He gave to it its name, and it is known by that denomination ever since. Cloquet describes it accurately, so does Quain; it is most distinctly seen in thin subjects.

6. In the Edinburgh Medical Journal for April, 1805, Sir A. Cooper has detailed a case of malformation of the urinary and genital organs, of a poor female admitted into St. Thomas's Hospital. Dissection showed the anterior portion of the bladder to be wanting, also the symphysis pubis, and the abdominal muscles situated above this part. The ureters entered the posterior part of the bladder, and they were increased to an enormous size, and formed at their extremities a kind of reservoir for the urine.

7. Sir Astley Cooper was an active promoter of the Medico-Chirurgical Society, and has contributed largely to their valuable transactions. The first paper in the first volume, consists of the relation of "A Case of Aneurism of the Carotid Artery." This case was treated by ligature upon the vessel, the *first* of the kind on record, and establishing a practice which has since been pursued, and successfully adopted. The first case was, however, unfortunate in its issue, inflammation of the aneurismal sac and the parts adjacent, having taken place about a fortnight after the operation, and by which the size of the tumour became so much increased, that by pressure on the pharynx and larynx, deglutition was prevented, and violent cough occasioned, to such a degree, as ultimately to impede respiration. The operation was performed under very disadvantageous circumstances in this case, from the length of time the disease had been permitted to exist, and the magnitude the tumour had acquired.



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