

**THE HISTORICAL RELATIONS OF
MEDICINE AND SURGERY TO THE
END OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY:
AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE
ST. LOUIS CONGRESS IN 1904**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649498178

The Historical Relations of Medicine and Surgery to the End of the Sixteenth Century: An Address Delivered at the St. Louis Congress in 1904 by T. Clifford Allbutt

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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THE HISTORICAL RELATIONS
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“ Or, comme il est impossible de connaître parfaitement la partie, si l'on ne connaît au moins grosso modo le tout, il est impossible d'être bon chirurgien si l'on ne connaît pas les principes et les généralités les plus importantes de la médecine. D'autre part, comme il est impossible de connaître parfaitement le tout, si l'on ne connaît dans une certaine mesure chacune de ses parties, il est impossible que celui-là soit bon médecin qui ignore absolument l'art de la chirurgie.”

HENRI DE MONDEVILLE.

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IN 1904

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MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1905
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TO MY
MANY GENEROUS AMERICAN FRIENDS
FRIENDS AS GENEROUS IN THEIR HOSPITALITY
TO THE STRANGER
AND THEIR APPRECIATION OF HIS DIFFIDENT SERVICE
AS IN THEIR LOVE OF LEARNING
THIS TRACT IS DEDICATED

S. FRANCISCO, 1898.
ST. LOUIS, 1904.

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PREFACE

IN Inner medicine, as in all the other departments of the Congress at St. Louis, two addresses were proposed—the first to deal with the outward relations of the subject, the second with its internal problems. My colleague, Dr. Thayer, was so good as to commit to me the outward relations, as in this respect I had some materials already in hand. In recent times the relations of medicine and surgery have become so complex, and in certain directions are still so perverse, that I have preferred to deal with them at their sources, and in their earlier and simpler connexions and contrasts; that is, in ancient and medieval times. In the times of Greece and Alexandria medicine and surgery were one; to the clear eye of the Greek they could not be sundered: in medieval times on the other hand new and vaster social constructions, new and more conflicting conditions, compelled our fathers to build in their eagerness on a narrow and temporary framework.

The analytic historian lays bare the Middle Ages of Europe; he goes to the sources, he works up his

descriptions, and we think we are learning something of that wonderful time until we drop *pièces justificatives* for the *Canterbury Tales*, and the drone of the lecture-room for the clarion of St. Bernard, or perchance wander into one of its minsters during the *Benedicite* or the *De profundis*, and start almost with fear to discover that their deeper and richer possession seems farther from us than ever. While we were repainting their pageants, deploring their furies, refuting their dialectics, it is suddenly revealed to us that to refute the conceptions of medieval thinkers is not to explain the origin of their ideas, and that beside their vision and their passion our hearts have grown cold and slow. To the Middle Ages we may adapt the fine thought of Burke that "dark confused uncertain images have a greater power to form the grander passions than those have which are more clear and determinate." And as to our modern civilities, have not these new islanders of the Pacific put them all on before our eyes, in a few months as it were; and dressed them even better than we have done! Still in our way we must on, anatomising the Middle Ages and searching for the lost key of their lyrical secret, that peradventure by dismembering the body we may reach its soul. Or is it rather by chemistry that we may extract this essence? Is it by weighing the spirit of Ionia, the spirit of Rome, the spirit

of Byzantium, the spirit of Cordova, that we shall capture the essence of Chartres, of Fulda, of Paris, of Bologna, of Florence? One spirit, indeed, glows through all their magic, a fire never utterly extinct, the spirit of ancient Greece—of Ionia, Athens, and Greek Italy, and so of all Italy, penetrating the alien hearts of Jew and Syrian, of Gaul and Spaniard, of Frank and Teuton, and revealing to all the wonder and beauty in common things.

As we cannot know any part of an age or people without an idea of the whole, nor take to ourselves a lesson from other times and other folk without some conception of their nature and fashion, so we cannot know modern Medicine unless we study it as a whole, in the past as well as in the present. From Greece and medieval Italy we have to bring home the lesson that our division of Medicine¹ into medicine and surgery had its root not in nature, nor even in natural artifice, but in clerical feudal and humanistic conceits. "Quae enim in natura fundata sunt crescent et augeantur; quae autem in opinione variantur non augentur."

If we inquire more closely how Medicine fared in the fiery youth of modern Europe, we may offer at any rate two parts of the answer: first, the iron rule of prince and prelate, wicked as individual

¹ In this essay I have written "Medicine" (with capital initial) to signify our profession as a whole; and "medicine" (with small initial) to signify "Inner medicine," as divided from surgery and obstetrics.