THE HARVEIAN ORATION, 1865

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HENRY W. ACLAND

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1865.

BY

HENRY W. ACLAND,

M.D. OXON., LL.D. CANTAB., F.R.S.,

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF MEDICINE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

AND

HON. PHYSICIAN TO H. R. H. THE PRINCE OF WALES.

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PRINTERS TO THE UNIVERSITY.

TO

THOMAS WATSON, M.D., F.R.S., D.C.L.,

PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS

OF ENGLAND,

THE FOLLOWING ORATION,

DELIVERED AND PRINTED BY HIS DESIRE,

IS NOW GRATEFULLY

DEDICATED.

OXFORD, 1866.

THE HARVEIAN ORATION,

1865.

WE celebrate once more the memory of those who in past times have brought honour to the College of Physicians of England; the memory also of those who have recently gone, of Kirkes, whose learning and skill were appreciated, and whose loss is lamented, wherever medical literature is known, of Turner, of the worthy brother of noble-hearted Southey, of Bird, and Duke, of one not yet laid in his grave, whose strong nature brought great fruit to others, to us, to himself—Ferguson; but above all of HARVEY, Founder of this commemorative Holyday. Happy we whom custom and his direction withdraw for a brief hour from the din and care of life to this peaceful task!

The occasion is singular. It might have been better if, when for the first time in History, HARVEY is discussed in his native tongue before the College he loved so well, the Cicero of English Medicine, as our

President has been justly called, had inaugurated this new series of discourses.

With combined authority and skill, Dr. Watson might have sketched with his strong yet pleasant touch the personal character of our Master; and would have drawn the old familiar man, keen of eye, small of stature, and gentle of mien. He might have set him before us a young and eager student with hair as black as raven, intent on his knife, or expounding its teachings; he might have shewn him later a peaceful contemplative man, now with head like snow, seated under a hedge with the Prince of Wales and his brother the Duke of York by his side[a], reading with them, till dislodged by a cannon ball, near the inn called Sun Rising, (even now standing on the glorious slope of Edge Hill,) whence he could see the battle raging at his feet below. Or, pursuing another course, our President might have shewn in long array what consequences have followed, and what may yet follow, from the accurate study of the laws which regulate the circulation of the blood in the animal kingdom; and have

[a] Letters of John Aubrey, vol. ii. part ii. p. 379.

given us his matured views of the relations of the vital fluid to the organism in health, and to the organism in disease; expounding principles for the philosophy, and deducing rules for the practice, of Medicine; telling us of disease averted, of health maintained, or of health restored.

Called upon this day to perform, with unequal power, the task which I wish had fallen into worthier hands, I propose to treat of one general topic; viz. how far some points in Harvey's Methods of Discovery are in accordance with the ideas which the experience of advancing Science has taught. If it can be shewn that, after the lapse of two centuries, not only his discoveries were valuable but his methods were correct, we may with renewed confidence begin a fresh series of annual Scientific Essays, which the College has wisely decided to ask from its working and zealous Fellows.

HARVEY is popularly known by only one of his works, that no doubt which has been most fruitful, but not that probably which caused him most labour. The studies which