

**DE ARTE PHISICALI ET DE
CIRURGIA OF MASTER JOHN
ARDERNE, SURGEON OF NEWARK
DATED 1412. RESEARCH STUDIES
IN MEDICAL HISTORY NO. I**

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Research studies in medical history No. I by John Arderne

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JOHN ARDERNE

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WELLCOME HISTORICAL MEDICAL MUSEUM.



RESEARCH STUDIES IN MEDICAL HISTORY.

No. 1.



JOAN ARDERNE

*From a Fifteenth Century Manuscript
in the British Museum, Sloane MS.2002*



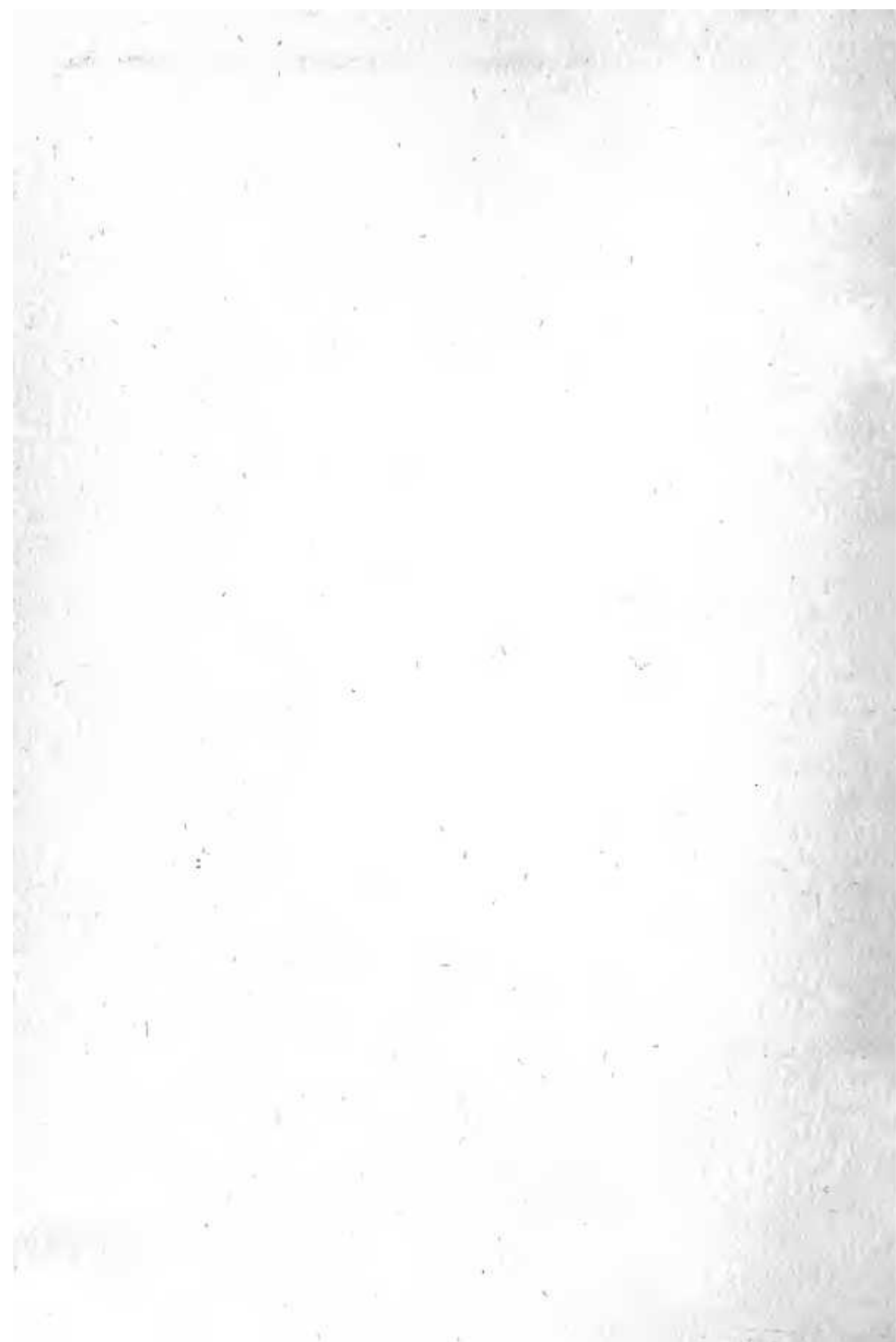
FOREWORD.

FROM the foundation of the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum in 1913, it has been my intention to publish from time to time, accounts of the research work carried out on the objects, manuscripts and other documents of special interest and importance in the Museum. Owing to the Great War this work was interrupted and had to be suspended.

A short time ago, Sir D'Arcy Power, K.B.E., kindly undertook the laborious task of translating the interesting ancient manuscript of John Arderne of Newark, now in the Royal Library at Stockholm, which throws an important light on English surgery in the XIVth century.

We are much indebted to Mr. Eric Millar, M.A., for having made a careful transcription of the document and our warmest thanks are due to Sir D'Arcy Power for the painstaking and thorough manner in which he has carried out the translation, which forms the first volume of the series. I trust it will be found of value not only to those interested in English surgery of the period, of which so little is known, but that it will also serve to stimulate the study of the History of Medicine.

HENRY S. WELLCOME.



PREFACE.

JOHN ARDERNE was born in 1307 and lived nearly to the end of the fourteenth century. He practised at Newark from 1349 until 1370, when he came to London and was probably admitted a member of the fraternity of surgeons. Nothing authentic is known about his early life but it is assumed from certain autobiographical details in his treatises, that before he settled at Newark he was a surgeon in the service of Henry Plantagenet, Earl of Derby and afterwards the first Duke of Lancaster. In this capacity he visited Antwerp in 1338, Algeçiras in Spain in 1343 and Bergerac in Aquitaine in 1347. The Duke died of the plague in 1361 and Arderne may then have attached himself to the Duke's son-in-law, John of Gaunt, who was called King of Castile and Leon in virtue of his marriage with Constance the daughter of Don Pedro I of Castile.

Arderne was essentially an operating surgeon whose practice lay amongst the nobility, wealthy landowners and the higher clergy. He was himself well educated though a layman and he met his patients on terms of equality. He was perfectly honest, knew himself to be a member of a serious profession and kept so open a mind that he says more than once, after stating his own practice "nevertheless do another man as him thinketh better."

He was a sound practical surgeon who carried out his work by methods which are not very different from those of the modern aseptic surgeon. He taught that wounds should heal without suppuration, that local applications to them should be as little irritating as possible and that the dressings should be infrequent. He cut boldly when necessary for he was not afraid of bleeding, and he had sufficient originality to invent the operation for the cure of fistula which, after falling into disuse for nearly five hundred years, is now universally employed. Theo-

retically, he was well read in surgery and in the general literature of the day for he quotes the older writers and his contemporaries often verbatim. He must therefore have possessed, or have had access to, a well stocked library of manuscripts. But if he was centuries in advance of his time surgically he was no wiser than his time in medicine. His medical treatment was essentially that of the Saxon leeches, treatment by spells, herbs and nasty or innocuous substances. In such matters he had no critical faculty but believed what he was told regardless of its source. He was, too, somewhat of a pharmacist and his name lived longer in this connection than as a surgeon. Three of the preparations he invented appear in the second issue of the first Pharmacopœia of 1618 and some of them were certainly in use as late 1733.

Arderne issued his writings in the form of separate treatises one of which appeared in 1376 and another in 1377. They are in Latin and he says they were written with his own hand. The treatises were afterwards collected—seemingly after his death and by different persons and they were translated into English at various times in the fifteenth century. The existing manuscripts of his works therefore, contain different combinations of the treatises variously arranged. Some are the complete works like the magnificent copy on vellum which has such carefully executed illustrations that it is usually exhibited at the British Museum as an example of fourteenth century work. Others are poorly written paper manuscripts whilst others again are merely fragments, for they consist of a page or two of a treatise which by some accident has escaped destruction. The number of manuscripts still in existence show that Arderne's teaching had a considerable influence on English surgeons for many years after his death. It is remarkable therefore, that none of his work was printed until 1588, when John Read of Gloucester published an abridgement of the "Treatises on Fistula." The publication was made as part of a scheme undertaken by some of the Elizabethan surgeons to go back to original sources for their knowledge. Nothing came of it, however, and to this day the bulk of Arderne's work has not passed through the press.