

**POST MORTEM:
ESSAYS, HISTORICAL
AND MEDICAL**

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Post mortem: essays, historical and medical by C. MacLaurin

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[Photo, Anderson.]
THE EMPEROR CHARLES V.
From a portrait by Titian (Madrid, Prado).

[Frontispiece.]

Post Mortem

Essays, Historical and Medical

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Preface

WHETHER the "great man" has had any real influence on the world, or whether history is merely a matter of ideas and tendencies among mankind, are still questions open to solution; but there is no doubt that great persons are still interesting; and it is the aim of this series of essays to throw such light upon them as is possible as regards their physical condition; and to consider how far their actions were influenced by their health. There are many remarkable people in history about whom we know too little to dogmatize, though we may strongly suspect that their mental and physical conditions were abnormal when they were driven to take actions which have passed into history; for instances, Mahomet and St. Paul. Such I have purposely omitted. But there were far more whose actions were clearly the result of their state of health; and some of these who happen to have been leaders at critical epochs I have ventured to study from the point of view of a doctor. This point of view appears to have been strangely neglected by historians and others. If the background against which it

PREFACE

shows its heroes and heroines should appear unsentimental and harsh, at least it appears to medical opinion as probably true; and it is our duty to seek Truth. If it appears to assume an iconoclastic attitude towards many ideals I am sorry, and can only wish that the patina cast upon their characters were more sentimental and beautiful.

Jeanne d'Arc and the Emperor Charles V were undoubtedly heroic figures who have been almost worshipped by many millions of people; yet undoubtedly they were human and subject to the unhappy frailties of other people. This in no way detracts from their renown. I must apologize for treating Don Quixote as a real person; he was quite as much a living individual as anyone in history. Through his glamour we can get a real glimpse of the character of Cervantes.

In Australia we have no access to the original sources of European history; we must rely upon the "printed word" as it appears in standard monographs and essays.

I owe many thanks to Miss Kibble, of the research department of the Sydney Public Library, without whose help this work could never have been undertaken.

SYDNEY, 1922.

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