

## **A rare medical book and its author / [Henry E Clark].**

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A RARE . . .  
MEDICAL BOOK  
AND . . .  
ITS AUTHOR .

BY

HENRY E. CLARK, M.R.C.S. Eng.  
Professor of Surgery, St. Mungo's College, Glasgow

Glasgow

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HENRY E. CLARK, M.R.C.S. ENG.

PROFESSOR OF SURGERY, ST. MUNGO'S COLLEGE, GLASGOW

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A RARE MEDICAL BOOK, AND  
ITS AUTHOR.

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SOME years ago a student presented me with an old book which he had picked up for a few pence at a bookstall. It is a fat duodecimo of 431 pages, bound in brown calf, in a bad state of preservation, and many of the pages are much worm-eaten. The title-page of it runs thus:—

*Supplementum Chirurgiae* | or the | SUPPLEMENT | To the  
| MARROW | of | CHYRURGERIE. | Wherein | Is contained  
Fevers, Simple and | Compound, Pestilential, and not, |  
Rickets, Small-Pox and Mea- | sles, with their Definitions,  
Causes, | Signes, Prognosticks, and Cures, | both general  
and particular. | As also | The Military Chest, containing  
all necessary | Medicaments, fit for Sea, or Land-Service,  
| whether Simples or Compounds, such as | purge, and  
those that do not; with their se- | veral vertues, doses,  
note of goodness, &c., | as also Instruments. | *Amongst*  
*which are many Approved Receipts* | *for several diseases.*  
| By JAMES COOKE, Practition- | er in *Physick*, and  
*Chirurgery*. | LONDON, Printed for *John Sherley*, at the  
| *Golden Pelican* in *Little Britain*. 1655.

James Cooke, of Warwick, was a well-known and successful practitioner and writer in the middle of the seventeenth century. His *Mellificium Chirurgiæ*, or "Marrow of Surgery," was a very popular text-book of medicine, which passed through many editions, and appears to have taken the place of Peter Lowe's *Discourse of the Whole Art of Chirurgerie* in England, if not in Scotland. Copies of it are not very rare, almost every medical library of importance possessing one or more. The copy in the library of the Glasgow Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons appears to be the first, and is dated 1648.<sup>1</sup> The *Supplementum Chirurgiæ*, on the other hand, is rare, and I have only been able to find it mentioned in the catalogue of the library of the British Museum, which possesses two copies, and in that of the Surgeon-General's Office, Washington, U.S.A., which has one. It is mentioned in Dr. Robert Watt's marvellous compilation, the *Bibliotheca Britannica*, and furnishes thus another testimony to the accuracy and completeness of that work.<sup>2</sup>

The "Supplement" is of the same size and is printed and bound in the same manner as the "Marrow," to which it is obviously a companion volume. Dr. Alex. Duncan suggests that the greater

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<sup>1</sup> The last edition seems to have been the sixth, dated 1717.

<sup>2</sup> I shall esteem it a favour if readers will furnish me with any other notices of the *Supplementum*, and inform me of other copies than those I have mentioned, if such exist.

rarity of the "Supplement" is probably explained by there being only one edition of it; he thinks it probable that the subject matter would be incorporated with all later editions of the "Marrow." This conjecture is exceedingly probable, but I have up to the present been unable to verify it.

James Cooke, of Warwick, the author of the "Marrow" and "Supplement," was a notable man in his time, and there are several facts in his history sufficiently important to be worth recalling. He was born in 1614, and died in 1688; he thus lived at one of the most critical periods of English history, and was in the prime of his life and at the height of his powers during the strain and stress of the Civil War. He appears to have been a very successful practitioner, and to have had an extensive practice, for he speaks of having cured many of rickets in "Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, and Warwickshire" with a certain prescription which he gives in the "Supplement." His practice was chiefly among the nobility and gentry of the midlands, and he states that, "Being commanded by the Lady Dowager Brooke to wait on her to London, to take the consult of physicians, in the way before we came to Tossiter" (Towcester, in Northamptonshire) "we met with the tydings of that fatal fire of London, which caused her honour to resolve for Hackney." This was in 1666, when Cooke was 52 years of age.

He was a skilful obstetrician; and his works show him to have been a keen observer and a man of

sound sense and discretion. His patron, Lord Brooke, was an enthusiastic supporter of the Parliamentary party, and there is every probability that Cooke was also a Roundhead. It thus came about that he remained undisturbed in the practice of his profession in spite of the Civil War, for he belonged to the dominant party, and was, besides, under the protection of the most powerful noble of the district.

In 1642 he was in attendance on the Parliamentary army at Stratford-on-Avon, and was so fortunate as to purchase some manuscripts and books from Mistress Susannah Hall, Shakespeare's eldest daughter, and widow of Dr. John Hall. He records the transaction in the following terms:—"Being, in my art, an attendant to parts of some regiments to keep the pass at the bridge of Stratford-on-Avon, there being then with me a mate allyed to the gentleman that writ the following observations in Latin, he invited me to the house of Mrs. Hall, wife to the deceased, to see the books left by Mr. Hall. After the view of them, she told me she had some books left, by one that professed physick, with her husband for some money. I told her, if I liked them, I would give her the money again. She brought them forth, among which was this,<sup>1</sup> with another of the author's, both intended for the presse. I, being acquainted with Mr. Hall's hand, told her that one or two of

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<sup>1</sup> The "Select Observations" mentioned below.

them were her husband's, and shewed them to her. She denied; I affirmed, till I perceived she began to be offended. At last I returned her the money." Mr. Sidney Lee, in his interesting and generally accurate little book about Stratford-on-Avon,<sup>1</sup> falls into the curious error of assuming that she did not sell them to Cooke:—"He informed her that some manuscripts of her husband were among them, and offered to buy them off her, *but she declined*, and disputed his opinion as to the authorship of the papers." Had Mr. Lee turned up the catalogue of any good medical library, he would have discovered that a translation into English of one of the manuscripts purchased (it was written in Latin) was published by Cooke in the year 1657 under the title of "Select Observations of English Bodies; or, Cures both Empiricall and Historicall performed upon very Eminent Persons in Desperate Diseases. First written in Latin by Mr. John Hall, physician, living at Stratford-on-Avon in Warwickshire, where he was very famous, as also in the countries adjacent, as appears by these Observations drawn out of severall hundreds of his choicest."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Stratford-on-Avon, from the Earliest Times to the Death of Shakespeare.* By Sidney Lee. With forty-five illustrations by Edward Hull. London: Seeley & Co. 1890.

<sup>2</sup> In the *Life of Shakespeare* recently published, Mr. Lee refers (in a footnote) to Dr. Hall's "Select Observations;" he has thus probably found out his error.

The interview between Shakespeare's daughter and the author of the "Marrow of Chirurgerie" presents several interesting features. We may assume (without any great stress of the imagination) that the "mate allyed" to Dr. Hall, who introduced Cooke, was Thomas Quiney, the husband of Judith Shakespeare, the younger daughter of the poet. He kept a vintner's shop, called "The Cage," in Bridge Street, Stratford—the street leading down to the bridge which the Parliamentary troops were engaged in guarding—and his shop would no doubt be a place of resort for the officers commanding the troops. It seems incredible that Mrs. Hall should not know her husband's writing, and that Cooke should be better informed than she was in the matter. But he undoubtedly proved to be in the right, for the work as published by him shows indubitable evidences as to Dr. Hall's authorship. We can only understand her ignorance if we remember that, though she is described on her monument as "witty above her sex," and "wise to salvation," she probably could neither read nor write. Several authors who have commented on Cooke's interview with Mrs. Hall have conjectured that among the MSS. handed over there might have been some writings of Shakespeare's, perchance an unpublished play, or another volume of sonnets. It must be allowed to be inherently improbable that Cooke would have made away with any plays or poems, if such existed in manuscript.

Though nominally a Roundhead, he does not appear to have been wanting in intelligence or breadth of view, and his publication of Dr. Hall's "Observations," as well as what little we know of him otherwise, convinces us that he was a keen man of business, and would not be likely to overlook the value which any writing of Shakespeare even then had.

Cooke lived an active, useful, and, I have little doubt, a happy life. Born in the reign of James I, he passed through the reign of Charles I (relatively long although cut short by a tragic ending), was active in the time of the Commonwealth, did his duty as a physician and a citizen in the lax times of Charles II, saw the brief and disturbed rule of James II, and only passed away just as the greatest revolution the British nation has known was so quietly and effectively accomplished. A worthy example of the old world practitioner, whose trained observation and sound commonsense had to make up for defects in scientific knowledge. His faith in medicines was great, and it would comfort many a physician nowadays had he like confidence in such a remedy as "shavings of harts-horne," of which Cooke says, "It is cordial, resisting venom, cleareth the heart, dispelleth winde, easeth collick, opens obstructions, killeth wormes, helps the jaundice, easeth pains in the reines and bladder, drives forth the small-pox and measles."

"There are two likenesses of Cooke, one at the

age of 64 in the 1679 edition of the 'Select Observations,' and one when 71 in the 1685 edition of the 'Marrow of Chirurgerie.' He had a fine head, with large but regular features, a slight moustache, and long hair."<sup>1</sup>

He died in 1688, and was buried in St. Mary's Church, Warwick. My enquiries as to any monument to his memory in that church have had a negative result. As the church was burned to the ground in 1694, many of the monuments perished in the fire, and it is probable that if there was a memorial to Cooke it was thus destroyed.

Mr. S. Timmins, the author of a history of Warwickshire,<sup>2</sup> mentions in that work that Cooke, in addition to the "Marrow of Chirurgerie," wrote also another work called the "Marrow of Physic." This is clearly an error, no independent work of that name having been published by Cooke, but the words "Marrow of Physic" form part of the sub-title of several of the later editions of the "Marrow of Chirurgerie."

The *Supplementum Chirurgiæ* treats of simple, intermittent, and putrid fevers; of rickets, small-pox, and measles; and the latter half is occupied by an enumeration of the various drugs, plasters, dressings,

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Aveling, in the first volume of the *Obstetrical Journal*, 1873, p. 449.

<sup>2</sup> *Popular County Histories: A History of Warwickshire*, by Sam. Timmins, F.S.A. London: Elliott Stock & Co. 1889.

and instruments which should be contained in a "Military Chest," with particulars as to how they should be employed. The section on rickets is of especial interest as being one of the earliest descriptions of the disease in the English language. Glisson's treatise, which especially drew attention to the condition, was published in 1650, but Cooke claims to have seen a description of it long before that date, but he does not say who the author was. "This disease is," he says, "as new; so, as peculiar to children; it hath received several names, as *Pædesplanch nosteocaces*, this I saw in Print, in a Thesis long before the *Doctor's Tract* on the subject; others *Cachexia Scorbutica*, and Doctor's; the *Rachitis*, nearly bordering on the vulgar name *Rickets*, and signifying the spinal disease, the spine being the first and principal, amongst the parts affected in this evil." In these descriptions the "Doctor" is evidently Glisson, whose "tract" was much talked of at the time that Cooke wrote.

The description of the signs of rickets would do no discredit to a modern text-book, and it would be difficult to add much to its completeness. In the matter of etiology Cooke had very definite views, but these did not include any suggestion as to the chemical qualities of the drinking-water. He gives the following as the causes:—"1. A weak and sickly constitution. 2. Diseases of one or more parents, as cold and moist distemper, ill-habit, cachexy, dropsy,

atrophy, &c. 2." (his numbers have here got astray) "Slothfulness, effeminacy, idle life of the parents. 3. Errors of the mother during her being with childe. 4. Debility of the new-born infant, if it be not from hard labour, with many others." It will be observed that Cooke's practice lay chiefly among the well-to-do, in a part of the country where there were no large cities, where fresh air was plentiful, and the drinking-water not unduly soft. It may be admitted, however, that sanitation was totally neglected and ventilation almost unknown, and while the towns were not large, the overcrowding in parts of them was as grave and even more disgraceful than at present.

The remedy which he vaunts as so successful was the following curious herbal concoction:—"Ceterach, maidenhaire each Mj, Scurvygrasse, Tamarisk, each Ms, Harts-tongue, liverwort, Mijs, China sliced two spoonfuls, anise-seeds, liquorish, each  $\zeta$ i, shavings of ivory, and harts-horne, each  $\zeta$ vi, boil them all in three gallons of new midling-wort to the consumption of the third part, after strain it, barme it up, after it is ready drink of it morning, at four o'clock in the afternoon, and in the night if drink be called for, yea, at all times." It was thus a fermented herb-beer, which might be taken as a beverage at any time.

Cooke describes measles and small-pox in the same chapter, and mixes them up in a very confusing

manner. But he is quite logical in so mixing them if his theory of their causation be accepted. "*Cause internal*," he says, "is the impurities of the mother's blood, which the infant in the womb draws in in the last months, the purer being not sufficient, this being attracted into the whole fleshie substance, is then hid insensibly for some years, yea some time many. Now when Nature cannot any longer suffer these impurities, it begins by ebullition to foment them like new must. By that ebullition the pure is separated from the impure, the impure by a certain *crisis* is thrust out, and the heat communicated to the heart kindles a Feaver. This is to be *observed* there's found in the masse of the blood a double excrement, the one thick the other thin; of the first is generated the *pox*, of the second *measles*; although they are both infected by one and the same ill quality."

The book contains many marvels to which I cannot further allude. What, for instance, would I not have given years ago to have known that *man's fat* "smooths cicatrices and scars after *pox*"! But, alas! the knowledge comes too late. Perhaps our successors 250 years after this may in like manner scoff at our faith in extracts of thyroid, testicle, and brain matter!

Even the page and a quarter of advertisements are not without interest, for we have the announcement of Mr. John Milton's pamphlet on "Prelatical

Episcopacy," of the "Translation of Virgil into English Meter" by Henry, Earl of Surrey, and, what is still more exciting, "Dr. Moyes' Relation of the Serpent found in the heart of *Jo. Pennant*, in which many curious questions concerning occult diseases are discussed."

The book has been given by me to the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons as a small addition to their valuable library.

