## Epoch-making books in British surgery. II, Certain works of chirurgerie by Thomas Gale, maister in chirurgerie / by Sir D'Arcy Power, K.B.E., F.S.A.

#### **Contributors**

Power, D'Arcy, Sir, 1855-1941

### **Publication/Creation**

Bristol: John Wright & Sons Ltd., 1927.

#### **Persistent URL**

https://wellcomecollection.org/works/fdj4f9wb



Wellcome Collection 183 Euston Road London NW1 2BE UK T +44 (0)20 7611 8722 E library@wellcomecollection.org https://wellcomecollection.org

# EPOCH-MAKING BOOKS IN BRITISH SURGERY

BY

SIR D'ARCY POWER, K.B.E., F.S.A.

# CERTAIN WORKS OF CHIRURGERIE BY THOMAS GALE, MAISTER IN CHIRURGERIE

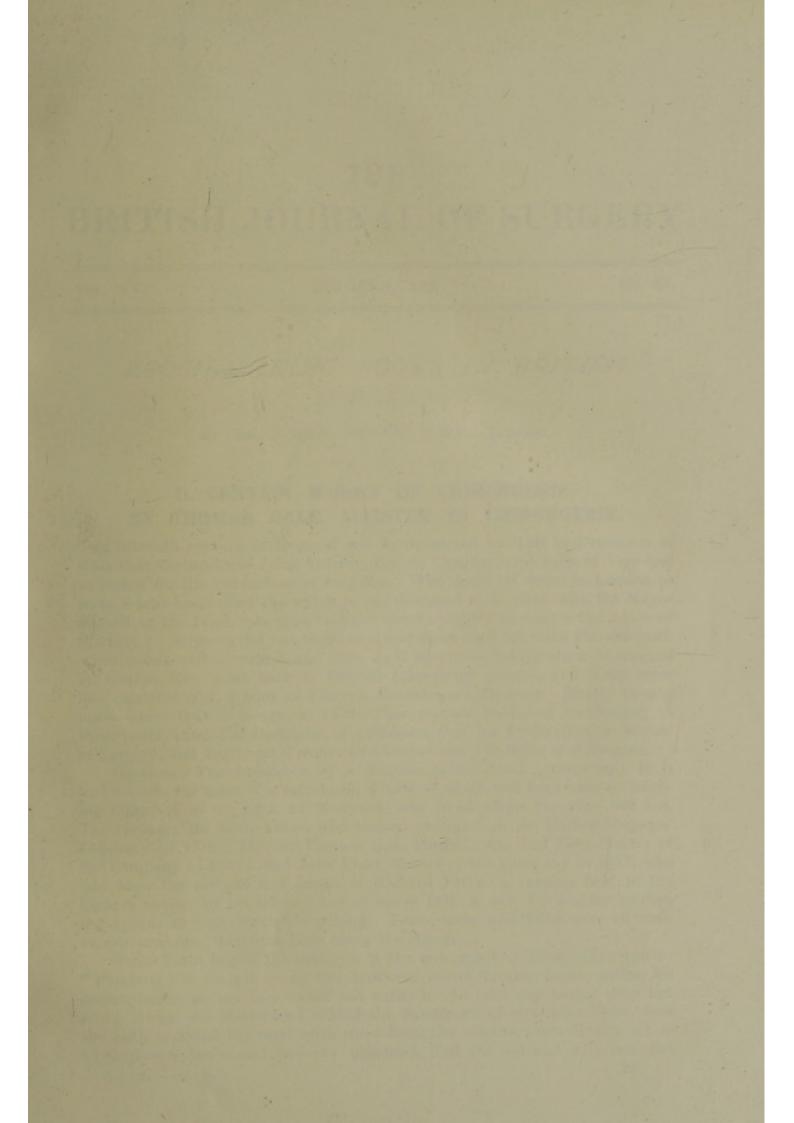
[Reprinted from The British Journal of Surgery, Vol. XV, No. 58, 1927.]

BRISTOL: JOHN WRIGHT & SONS LTD.

LONDON: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT & Co. Ltd.

1927







## THE

## BRITISH JOURNAL OF SURGERY

VOL. XV.

OCTOBER, 1927.

No. 58.

## EPOCH-MAKING BOOKS IN BRITISH SURGERY.

BY SIR D'ARCY POWER, K.B.E., LONDON.

## II. CERTAIN WORKS OF CHIRURGERIE THOMAS GALE, MAISTER IN CHIRURGERIE.

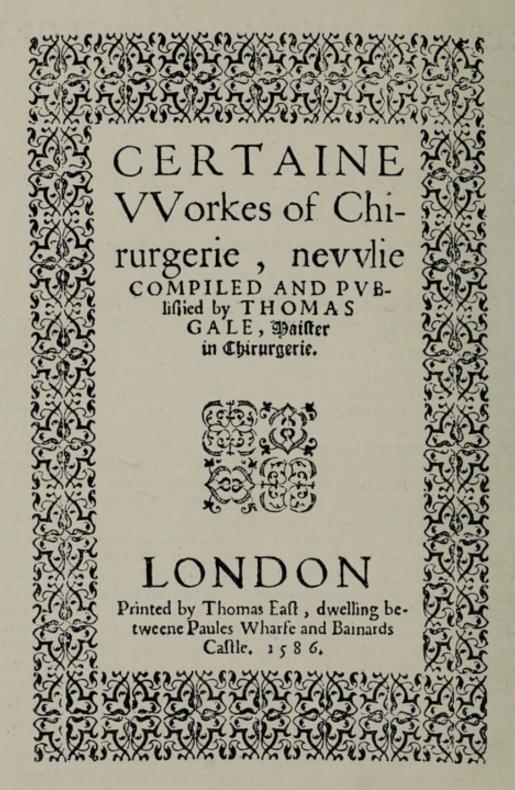
The fifteenth century in England was so distracted by wars and rumours of wars that the works of John Arderne, Gui de Chauliac, and John of Vigo had to suffice for the instruction of surgeons. Who could sit down in London to write a text-book when the watch of ten thousand men, often with the Mayor himself at the head, was parading the streets nightly to ensure the peace of the City? Surgeons did not begin to write about their art until the sixteenth century was well advanced, and then, as if they were taking stock of surgical knowledge, they went back to the old manuscript sources, and there came into existence such a book as Vicary's Englishman's Treasure. Nearly twenty years later-that is to say, in 1563-Thomas Gale published his Surgery in three parts: first The Institution of a Surgeon, then his Enchiridion or Manual of Surgery, and finally his Treatise on Gunshot and The Office of a Surgeon.

Of these, The Institution of a Surgeon is the most interesting. It is thrown into the form of a catechism, a method which had been used in teaching midwives as far back as Moschion, who lived about the year 580 A.D. The speakers are John Yates, who was an examiner in the Barber-Surgeons' Company in 1570; Maister Thomas Gale himself, who had been Master of the Company in 1561; and John Field, Master of the Company in 1577, who had been the servant and friend of Richard Ferris, a surgeon held in the highest respect by his fellows, but of whom little is now known, for he does not appear to have written anything. Yates, Gale, and Field were all well-

known surgeons, therefore, Gale being the eldest.

John Yates begins the dialogue in the true spirit of Elizabethan times: "Phæbus who chaseth away the dark and uncomfortable night casting his golden beams on my face would not suffer me to take any longer sleep but said: Awake for shame and behold the handiwork of our sister Flora, how she hath revested the earth with most beautiful colours, marvellously set in trees, plants, herbs and flowers; insomuch that the old and withered coat

12



of Winter is quite done away and put out of remembrance; at which words of Phæbus my heart quickened in me, and all desire of sleep was eft soon forgotten. Wherefore I am now come into this beautiful meadow to recreate myself and gather some of those pleasant herbs and flowers which here do grow. But let me see, methinks I see two men walking together and reasoning also very ernestly. I will approach nearer unto them, perchance they be of my acquaintance; surely I should know them. I am deceived if the one be not my friend M. Gale and the other Maister Field. It is so indeed, wherefore I will go and salute them. God that hath brought us together into this place make this day prosperous and fortunate unto you both.

"Tho. Gale: Brother Yates, the same we wish unto you and you are welcome into our companie.

"John Field: This fair and pleasant morning will not suffer Maister Yates to keep his bed, but leaving the city he roameth the fields to espy out some strange herbs unto him yet unknown,

"John Yates: I must of force confess that you do hit the nail on the head, but since my hap is so fortunate as to meet with you both and that now in this pleasant morning I would leave off my former determined purpose and require you to enter into some talk of surgery.

"Tho. Gale: Your request is honest and reasonable and therefore not to be denied.

"John Field: We were about the like thing whenas you saluted us, wherefore renewing our first talk we will accomplish your desire."

The trio then discuss the writers on surgery, the etymology of the word, and the low state into which surgery had fallen. They agree that the operation of trephining is satisfactory, and Gale says: "In my judgement the trepan is most necessary and of an excellent invention in hurts of the head. For without it where the cranium is fractured, bruised or depressed you shall little prevail". He quotes a case in illustration when "Anno 1559 in Cambridgeshire a servant of one Mr. Wroth riding in the fields and leading a young horse in a halter tied fast about the arm of the servant, the horse being wild and not broken, starting aside, unhorsed the man and drew him by his arm about a great field so long that what with striking, what with drawing, haling and pulling, being wearied he stood still until company came and unloosed the halter, and took up the man half dead and conveyed him unto his master's house. Chirurgeons were sent for who finding the servant speechless and without remembrance of any one whom he saw departed and left him for uncurable. Mr. Wroth sent for me and I seeing him speechless and without remembrance conjectured the hinder part of the head to be hurt and smitten of the horse, which I was more certain of when feeling that part I found it soft. Wherefore I, taking off the hair, did first make incision and after that set a trepan on his head and bored the cranium through and took out the piece of bone; which done, there issued out much blood, black in colour. The next day following the servant spake and came again to his perfect remembrance and I using things in this cure as art required God restored the man in my hands to his perfect health." To this John Yates replies: "This was a worthy cure and this is a noble instrument."

Inflammation and ulcers are then spoken of, and afterwards hernia. John Yates asks: "And what judge you Epiplocele to be?" John Field answers: "I will not only speak of that but also of the other kinds of Hernia. An epiplocele is a tumour coming when the Omentum falleth into the purse of the testicles. And by the like reason Enterocele taketh its name when the intestines fall into the aforesaid place. And enteroepiplocele followeth when both Omentum and the intestines fall into the scrotum or purse of the testicles. Furthermore Bubonocele happeneth when the Peritoneum is ruptured or wounded by the flanks. Exomphalos is a tumour pertaining to the overthwart muscles of the Abdomen, which being relaxed there followeth a starting or eminence of the navel." Master Gale cuts short the discussion with the remark: "My brother Yates doth the more readily conceive the differences of these kinds of Hernia for that he hath a peculiar way of curing some of them, especially of Enterocele, wherefore we will no longer stand in uttering the differences of them."

Of fractures Thomas Gale says: "There be two kinds of fractures, a simple fracture and a compound fracture.

"John Yates: What is a simple fracture?

"John Field: A simple fracture is a solution or division of continuity made in a bone without any other affect joined with it.

"John Yates: What is a compound fracture?

"JOHN FIELD: It is also a solution of unity made in the bone, having one or more affects to it connected and joined.

"John Yates: How many differences be there of fractures?

"Thomas Gale: You must note that like as there be simple and compound fractures, so in like manner there be differences of fractures both simple and compound. Wherefore let me know of which fracture you would know the difference?"

To which John Yates in assumed humility replies: "I would right gladly understand all the differences, although for want of knowledge I cannot orderly demand of you. Wherefore I pray you first to begin with the differences of simple fractures and then to the compound", which Thomas Gale does at some length.

Then comes the question of the suture and dressing of wounds, about which John Yates says: "I pray you let no time herein be lost for loth I were to depart without the knowledge of them and for that you first made mention of stitching I pray you first begin with it." Thomas Gale describes three kinds of suture, and John Field says: "the needle must be long and small, being three square, the eye hollowed in that the thread may the more easily follow." And John Yates sums up the whole matter of the discourse by saying: "I will repeat in brief words so much as I can remember". The dialogue ends by Thomas Gale inviting them to supper. "And now behold, we be come to the City. Wherefore we will now leave off talk here and you both shall this night take part of such cheer as God hath sent me, and let us recreate our spirits and be merry I pray you.

"JOHN FIELD: I thank you heartily, Sir, and I rejoice that my brother Yates hath so firm and perfect a memory. God send more such to follow Chirurgery.

"John Yates: I thank you both for the great benefit I have received at your hands and God grant me to spend many days in this sort."

Gale must have been a thoroughly good fellow as well as a good surgeon, for we read that in 1562—the year before this treatise was published—there was a great (archery) shooting of the Barber-Surgeons for a great supper at their own hall and they had six drums playing, and a flute and two great flags, and as a shot was won down went one and up the other, and Master Gale and his side won the supper. His teaching was sound and was the result of experience in war. He says in his *Treatise on Gunshot*, after quoting cases where he had exercised a masterly inactivity and the patient had recovered: "These I do bring forward only for example's sake, that other Chirurgions being in the wars should not too much busy themselves or put the patient to pain and in danger in taking out the shot."

Gale's treatises are less racy than those of John Arderne. They contain, too, somewhat more theory and less personal experience; but they are full of sound common sense, and the teaching is well suited to those whose surgical knowledge was of the slightest.

