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# EPOCH-MAKING BOOKS IN BRITISH SURGERY

BY

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JOHNSON'S AMBROSE PAREY

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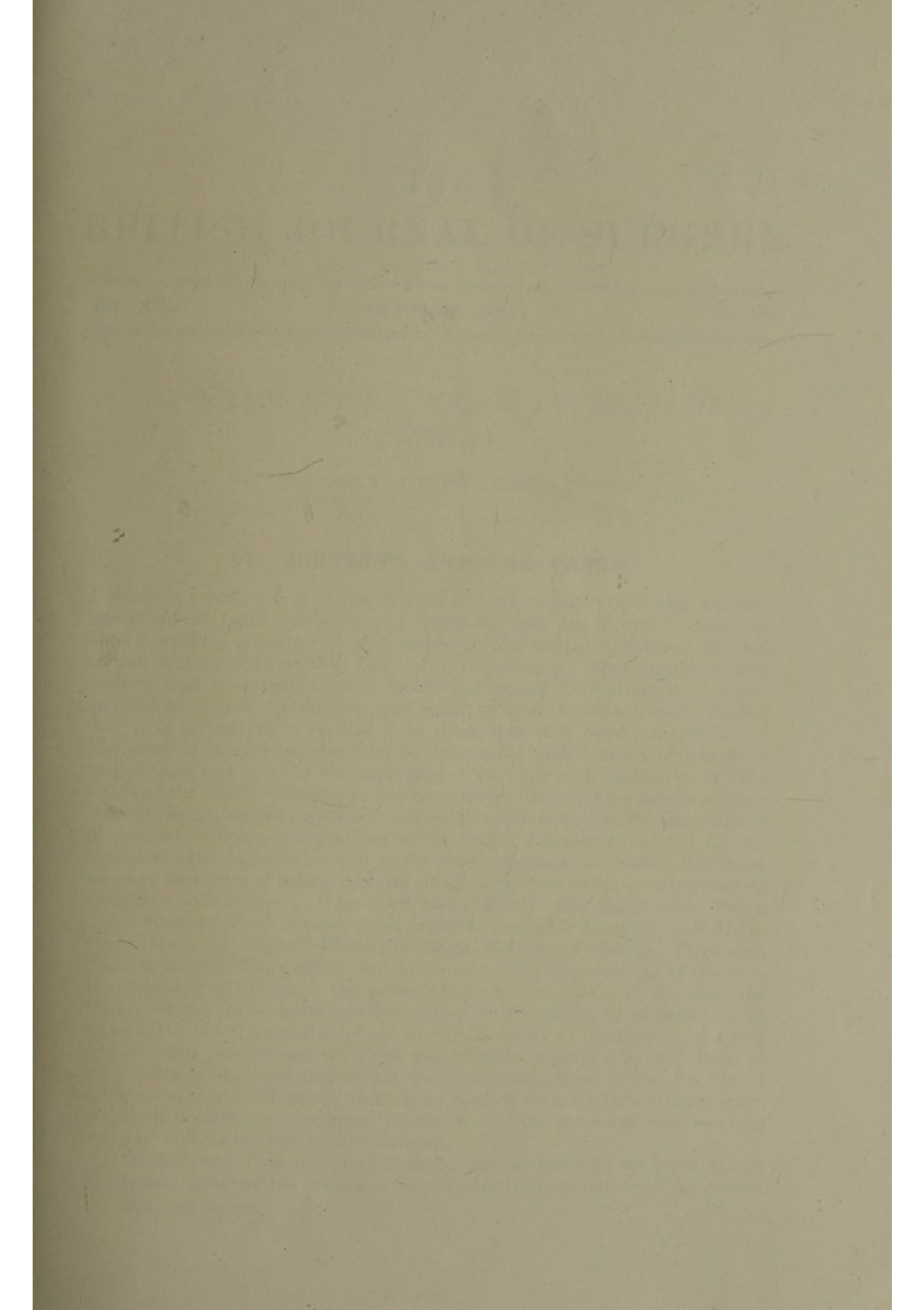
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## *EPOCH-MAKING BOOKS IN BRITISH SURGERY.*

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

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### VI. JOHNSON'S AMBROSE PAREY.

JOHNSON'S translation of "The Workes of that famous Chirurgion Ambrose Parey out of Latin and compared diligently with the French" made the book a working guide for English surgeons from the appearance of the first edition in 1634 until at least the end of the century. The surgeons of this country took it at once to their hearts and quoted freely from it in season and out of season, for Johnson had made it speak in such homely English that it is difficult when reading it to think that it is merely a translation. The need of English surgeons for a trustworthy and detailed text-book on surgery was very great at the beginning of the reign of King Charles I. The works of the Tudor surgeons, as has been shown, merely gave details of their own somewhat limited experience. Woodall wrote especially for the guidance of medical officers serving at sea or on land: Johnson translated for the benefit of civil surgeons as well as for those attached to armies. The book was a perfect mine of information on all subjects, even on those only remotely connected with surgery. "Save Art and Politics," says Mr. Stephen Paget, "the works of Paré contain every possible subject; Anatomy and Physiology, Medicine, Surgery, Obstetrics, State Medicine, Pathology, Pharmacy, Natural History, Demonology and much else. The divine origin of diseases, the influence of the stars, the power of devils, the nature of the soul, the history of medicine—he ranges from these to the tricks of beggars and of quacks, the homely remedies of old women, the folly of tight-lacing, the best sort of tooth powder and the right way to make pap for a baby." Best of all perhaps is the trouncing of Etienne Gourmalen, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Paris. Here was really good reading for a winter's evening when as yet there were no newspapers, no novels, and the romances were too long and too dull to interest a tired surgeon.

Of Ambroise Paré the great French surgeon (1509–90) we know much; of Thomas Johnson his translator comparatively little, although he carried



into the seventeenth century the grand tradition of the translators of the Elizabethan period—translators who, whilst adhering fairly closely to their texts, were able to render their authors' writings into the nervous English which it is still a joy to read. Johnson appears first as an apothecary with a physic garden in Snow Hill close to St. Bartholomew's Hospital; then as a botanist of repute, and with such a knowledge of plants that he was able to edit, correct, and largely augment Gerard's Herball; lastly as a Royalist Lieutenant-Colonel of Horse who was wounded in the defence of Basing-House, where he received a shot in the shoulder on Sept. 14, 1644, "whereby contracting a fever he died a fortnight after, his worth challenging funerall tears being no less eminent in the garrison for his valour and conduct as a soldier than famous through the kingdom for his excellence as an herbarist and physician." It is recorded of him that "when a dangerous piece of service was to be done, this doctor, who publicly pretended not to valour, undertook and performed it." In 1633 he published Gerard's Herball, a folio of 1630 pages with innumerable drawings of plants; in 1634—the very next year—the "Works of Ambrose Parey" appeared, a folio of 1173 pages also illustrated with hundreds of cuts. During those years his house must have been full of proof sheets and positively littered with pulls of the blocks, each of which had to be allotted to its proper place. How was it done and what hours did Johnson keep? Philemon Holland's work was mere child's play in comparison, for his Pliny, Livy, Plutarch, and Schola Salernitana have no illustrations, so everything was plain sailing. There is, however, some evidence to show that Johnson did not work single-handed. Parey was on the stocks for some time, because a licence was taken out for the book at Stationers' Hall as early as September, 1629. The "Book of Apologies and Voyages", too, which appeared after the Latin translation attributed to Guillemeau, from which Johnson worked, was not issued until 1585. It was therefore especially translated out of the French by George Baker, who was, Johnson says, "a surgeon of this City since that time, as I heare, dead beyond the seas."

George Baker was Serjeant Surgeon to Queen Elizabeth, and at one time Master of the United Company of Barbers and Surgeons of London. He did some good literary work in his day and was a friend of Gerard, who had served as one of the public examiners during his Mastership. He seems to have been a man of violent temper, for there is a minute in the records of the Barber-Surgeons' Company dated "25 March 1577. Here at this Court was a great contention and strife spoken of and ended between George Baker and William Clowes for that they both contrary to order and the good and wholesome rules of this house misused each other and fought in the fields together. But the Master, Wardens and Assistance wishing that they might be and continue loving brothers pardoned this their great offence in hope of amendment." Johnson's note has by some accident been overlooked by those who have recorded the facts of George Baker's life. Nothing was known about him after he left the Company except that he died in 1609. It is clear that he had been living in France and that he had a competent knowledge of the language.

Johnson published a second edition of Gerard's Herball in 1636, but the





THE  
WORKES  
of that famous  
Chirurgion  
Ambrose Parey  
*Translated out of  
Latine and compared  
with the French.  
by Tho: Johnson.*

Whereunto are added three Tractates  
out of Adrianus Spigelius of the  
Veines, Arteries, & Nerves,  
with large Figures.

Also a Table of the Bookes and Chapters.

London. 1634.  
Printed by Richard Cotes, and  
Willi. Dugard, and are to be sold by John  
Clarke, Entering into Mercers Chappell, 1640.





second edition of Paré's Surgery did not appear until 1649, and by that time the gallant and industrious translator had been dead for five years.

The following extracts show the value of the information given and the vigour of the translation. Paré's surgical training was almost entirely gained in camps, but he was able to adjust his teaching to the requirements of surgeons in civil practice. Thus, speaking of the reduction of a dislocated shoulder he says: "The patient must be layd with his backe on the ground upon a Cover-lid or Mat, and a clew of yarne or leathern-ball stuffed with tow or cotton, of such bignesse as may serve to fill up the cavities must be put under his arm-pit, that so the bone may straight-wayes the more easily be forced by the heele into its cavity. Then let the Surgeon sit beside him, even over against the luxated shoulder; and if his right shoulder be luxated, he shall put his right heele to the ball which filled up the armpit; but if the left, then the left heele. Then let him forthwith draw towards him the Patients arme, taking hold thereof with both his hands and at the same instant of time strongly presse the arme-pit with his heele. Whilst this is in doing one shall stand at the Patients backe, who shall lift up his shoulder with a towell, or some such thing fitted for that purpose, and also with his heele presse downe the top of the shoulder-blade; another also shall sit on the other side of the Patient, who, holding him, shall hinder him from stirring this way or that way at the necessary extension in setting it." He further teaches that the head of the humerus may be displaced into the armpit, outwards or forwards.

Paré draws attention to the metastatic abscesses which occur in pyæmia, a complication which does not seem to have been noticed previously. He says, speaking by the mouth of Johnson: "In these late civill warres the wounds which were for their quantity small, for the condition of the wounded parts but little, have caused so many and grievous accidents and lastly death itself. Now there came such a stincke, which is a most assured signe of putrefaction, from these wounds when they were dressed that such as stood by could scarce endure it, neither could this stincke bee attributed to the want of dressing or fault of the Chirurgion, for the wounds of the Princes and Nobility stunk as ill as those of the common Souldiers. And the corruption was such that if any chanced to bee undrest for one day, which sometimes happened amongst such a multitude of wounded persons, the next day the wound would be full of wormes. Besides also, which furthermore argues a great putrifaction of humors, many had Abscesses in parts opposite to their wounds, as in the left knee when as the right shoulder was wounded; in the left arme when as the right Leg was hurt. Which I remember befell the King of Navarre, the Duke of Nevers, the Lord Rendan and divers others. For all men had nature so overcharged with abundance of vicious humors that if it expelled not part thereof by impostumes [abscesses] to the habite of the body it certainly otherwise disposed of it amongst the inner parts of the body, for in dissecting dead bodies wee observed that the Spleene, Liver, Lungs and other Bowells were purulent and hence it was that the patients by reason of vapours sent from them to the heart were troubled with continuall feavers. But the Liver and all the veinous parts being polluted and so the generation of the laudable blood hindred, they languished for want of



fitting nourishment. But when the Braine by vapours was drawne in to sympathize with the rest they were molested with Ravings and Convulsions. Wherefore if any thing succeeded unprosperously in so great malignancie of wounds the Chirurgeon was not to be blamed for that it were a crime to fight against God and the Aire wherein the hidden scourges of the divine justice lye hid." Truly a comfortable doctrine from the surgeon's point of view.

Paré recognized clearly fracture of the skull by contrecoup, and he devotes a chapter to "Resonitus or Counter-fissure", in his book "of the Greene and Bloody Wounds of each Part" saying: "Sometimes the fracture is made in the part opposite to that which received the blow; as if the right side be stricke the left is cloven. This kinde of fracture is very dangerous because we cannot finde it out by any certaine signe. Wherefore, if at any time the patient dye of such a fracture, the Chirurgion must be pardoned. This shall be made manifest by recitall of the following historie,—A servant of Massus the postmaster, had a greivous blow with a stone upon the right Bregma, which made but a small wound yet a great contusion and Tumour. Wherefore, that it might more plainely appeare whether the bone had received any harme and also that the congealed blood might be pressed forth, the wound was dilated, the skinne being opened by Theodore Hereus, the Chirurgion, who as hee was a skillful workeman and an honest man omitted nothing which Art might doe for his cure. When he had divided the skinne the bone was found whole, although it was much to bee feared it was broken because he fell presently to the ground with the blow, vomited and showed other signes of a fractured scull; so it happened that he dyed on the one and twentieth day of his sicknes. But I, being called to learne and search how he came by his death, deviding the scull with a saw, found in the part opposite to the blow a great quantity of sanies or bloody matter and an Abscesse in the Crassa meninx [dura mater] and also in the substance of the very braine but no sutures but the two scaly ones. Therefore, that is certaine which is now confirmed by the authority of Hippocrates as also by reason and experience, that a blow may bee received on the one side and the bone may be fractured on the opposite, especially in such as have either no sutures or else so firmly united and closed that they are scarce apparent."

The next extract is hackneyed, but it still bears repetition. It tells of the way in which Paré was driven to use a simple dressing for gunshot wounds: "In the yeare of our Lord 1536 [he was born in 1509 or 1510] I was in the Kings Army, the Chirurgion of Monsieur Montejan, Generall of the foote. I will tell the truth, I was not very expert at that time in matters of Chirurgery, neither was I used to dresse wounds made by Gunshot. Now I had read in John de Vigo that wounds made by Gunshot were venenate or poisoned and that by reason of the Gunpowder. Wherefore, for their cure it was expedient to burne or cauterize them with oyle of Elders, scalding hot, with a little Treacle mixed therewith. It chanced on a time that by reason of the multitude that were hurt, I wanted this Oyle. Now because there were some few left to be dressed I was forced, that I might seem to want nothing and that I might not leave them undrest, to apply a digestive made of the yolke of an egge, oyle of Roses and Turpentine. I could not sleepe all that night for I was troubled in minde and the dressing of the precedent day



(which I judged unfit) troubled my thoughts; and I feared that the next day I should finde them dead or at the point of death by the poyson of the wound, whom I had not dressed with the scalding oyle. Therefore I rose early in the morning, I visited my patients and beyound expectation I found such as I had dressed with a digestive onely, free from vehemencie of paine, to have had good rest and that their wounds were not inflamed nor tumified but, on the contrary, the others that were burnt with the scalding oyle were feaverish, tormented with much paine and the parts about their wounds were swolne. When I had many times tryed this in divers others I thought this much, that neither I, nor any other, should ever cauterize any wounded with Gunshot." Thus began a revolution in the treatment of gunshot wounds, not all at once though, for the method was not generally adopted, and Paré himself preferred a balsam of boiled whelps and earthworms to the simpler dressing which necessity had compelled him to use with such good results.

To stop bleeding after amputation he recommends that: "The ends of the vessells lying hid in the flesh must be taken hold of & drawn, with this instrument [a pair of Crow's Beak forceps], forth of the muscles where into they presently after the amputation withdrew themselves, as all parts are still used to withdraw themselves, towards their originalls. In performance of this worke you neede take no great care if you, together with the vessells, comprehend some portion of the neighbouring parts, as of the flesh, for hereof will ensue no harme, but the vessells will bee consolidated with the more ease than if they, being bloodlesse parts, should grow together by themselves. To conclude, when you have so drawne them forth binde them with a strong double thred."

"Verily," he goes on to say in another chapter, "I confesse I formerly have used to stanch the bleeding of members after amputation after another manner than that I have a little before mentioned. Whereof I am ashamed and agreived. But what should I doe? I had observed my maisters, whose methods I entended to follow, alwaies to doe the like; who thought themselves singularly well appointed to stanch a flux of blood when they were furnished with various store of hot Irons and causticke medicines which they would use to the dismembred part, now one, then another, as they themselves thought meete. Which thing cannot be spoken or but thought upon without great horror much lesse acted. For this kinde of remedy could not but bringe great and tormenting paine to the patient, seeing such fresh wounds made in the quicke and sound flesh are endowed with exquisite sense. Neither can any causticke be applyed to nervous bodies but that this horrid impression of the fire will be presently communicated to the inward parts whence horrid symptomes ensue and oftentimes death it selfe. And verily of such as were burnt the third part scarse ever recovered and that with much adoe for that combust wounds difficultly come to cicatrisation; for by this burning are caused cruell paines whence a Feaver, Convulsion and oft times other accidents worse than these. Adde, hereunto, that when the eschar fell away oft times a new hæmorrhagye ensued for stanching whereof they were forced to use other causticke and burning Instruments. Neither did these good men know other course so by this repetition there was great losse and waste made of the fleshy and nervous substance of the part. Wherefore I



most earnestly entreate all Chirurgions that leaving this old and too too cruell way of healing they would embrace this new, which, I thinke, was taught mee by the speciall favour of the sacred Deitie, for I learnt it not of my maisters, nor of any other, neither have I at any time found it used by any." These brave words and good advice were wasted in England, for in London the cautery was certainly in use to stop bleeding after amputation until 1745.

The title page, of which a slightly reduced copy is here given, is identical in the editions of 1634 and 1649. It was engraved by Thomas Cecil, of whom very little is known except that he lived and worked in London from 1627 until 1635.









