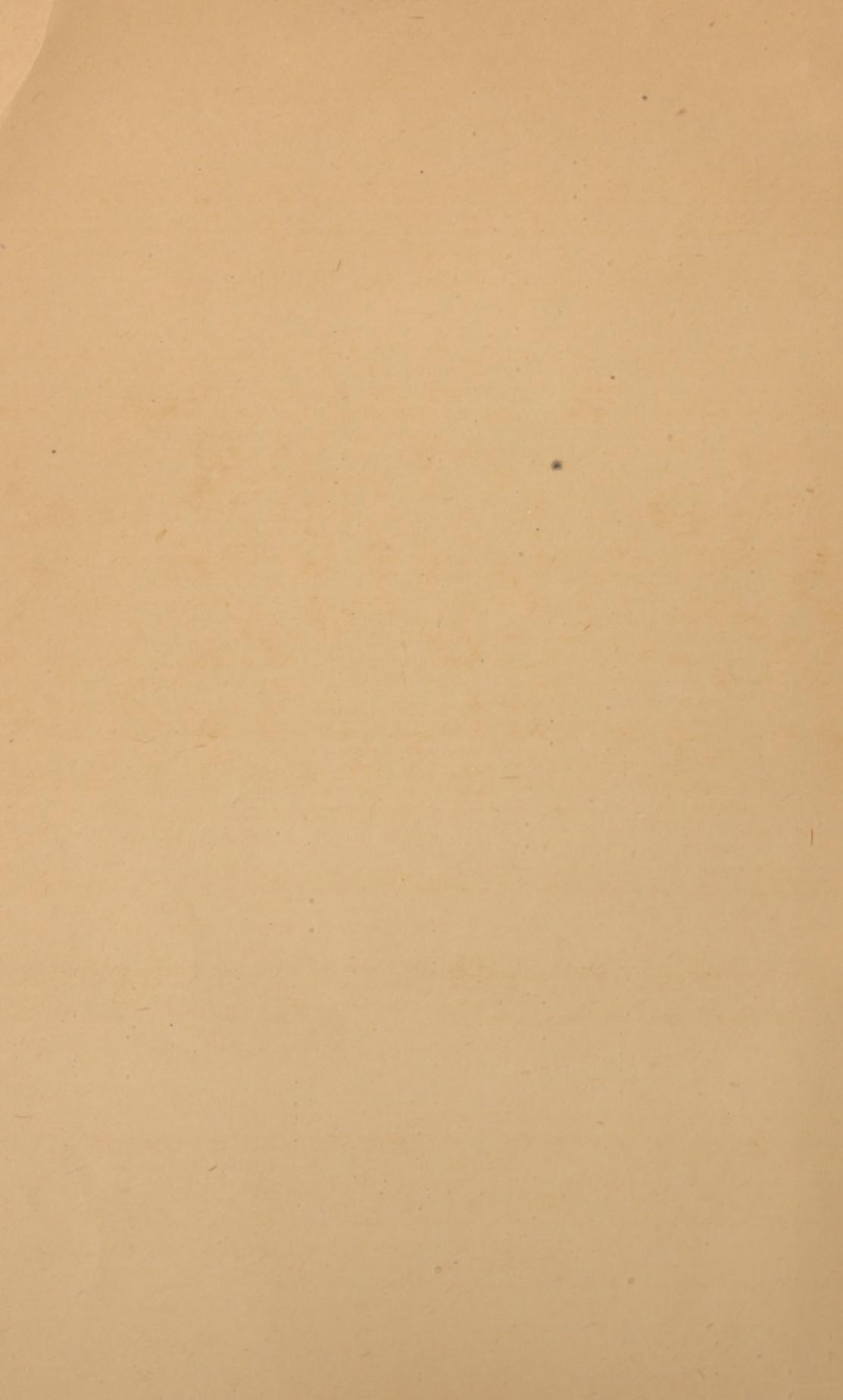


Some books which all
physicians should read.







SOME BOOKS WHICH ALL PHYSICIANS SHOULD READ.

During the past eight or ten months the literary journals of Great Britain and of this country have been filled with attempts to form a list of "the best hundred books" of the world's literature. The impetus to the discussion was given by Sir John Lubbock in a lecture delivered before a Workingmen's College. Sir John's intention was to indicate what books are best worth reading by the average man who desires a general knowledge of the progress of human thought.

The practical value of such prescribed courses of reading may be open to question, and an inspection of the lists submitted by a number of distinguished men of letters, such as Prof. Ruskin, William Morris, Swinburne, Prof. Max Müller, the head masters of Eton and Harrow Schools, and Prof. Blackie shows a wide divergence of views upon the subject, and it would probably be difficult to draw up a catalogue of books which any two equally competent judges would agree upon as "best."

The discussion has, however, suggested a few thoughts to us upon a similar topic. Commencement orators never fail to picture the necessity of constant study as a condition requisite to the professional success of the newly-fledged doctor. It goes without saying, of course, that the earnest student and physician will always endeavor to keep in line with medical progress by a diligent study of what may be called the "tools" of his profession, *i. e.*, text-books, special monographs, and medical journals. But there is a different class of professional reading, which cannot be included among the "tools," and which, nevertheless should be read by every physician who aspires to be something more than a mere handicraftsman. We do not allude here to the master-works of

general literature; these should be the intellectual property of all educated men. In submitting a list of such books as in our opinion, are best worth reading by physicians, we do not desire to be considered as prescribing for those whose tastes lie in a different direction; neither do we wish to be considered as conceited enough to believe that many of our readers could not furnish better lists. Our desire is simply to indicate more or less specifically the books which represent the history of the progress of professional thought, and which no one with any claim to professional culture can afford to ignore. Our list is as follows:

1. *Hippocrates. On Ancient Medicine; On Airs, Waters and Places, and Aphorisms.*

These works are fairly representative of the writings of the father of medicine. They are now accessible to American physicians in Dr. Francis Adams' unequalled translation, as published in Wood's Library for 1886.

2. *Celsus. Eight Books on Medicine.*

There are three English translations of this classic, by Lee, Greive and Stegall, but they are all out of print and rare. A French translation by Védérnes was published by Masson in 1876. Dr. Lee's translation is in the library of the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of Maryland.

3. *Rhazes. On Small-pox and Measles.*

Dr. Greenhill's scholarly translation of this monograph of the most original of the Arab physicians was published by the Sydenham Society, in 1848. There are also earlier English translations by Theobald and Stack, the last being reprinted a number of times in a collection of Mead's works. A reprint of Greenhill's translation is very desirable.

4. *The Code of Health of the Medical School of Salernum.*

Of the *Regimen Sanitatis Salernitanum* various translations have been made. Professor John Ordonaux has given an exquisite version of this charming and suggestive poem. Unfortunately it is published in such an expensive form (N. Y., Harper & Bros.) that it is inaccessible to many.

5. *Sydenham. On Small-pox, Gout and Dropsy.*

An American edition of Sydenham's works was published by Dr. Benjamin Rush. It is now out of print, but is not very rare.

6. *Van Swieten. Commentaries on Boerhaave's Aphorisms.*

The commentaries are rather voluminous, but few medical works possess such depth of learning expressed in such a felicitous manner.

7. *Morgagni. On the Seats and Causes of Disease.*

The acute observations of the founder of pathological anatomy deserve earnest study. The book should be read entire; not in the condensed editions, where most of the spirit of the work has been extracted, and only the dry details remain.

8. *Hunter. On the Blood, Inflammation, and Gunshot Wounds.*

None of the works of this great English surgeon, anatomist and pathologist are easy reading; but a careful study of any of them well repays the trouble and time expended.

9. *Rush. Medical Inquiries and Observations.*

The works of Dr. Rush should be read by every American physician. His profound learning and excellent common sense combine to give his observations permanent value.

10. *Hahnemann. The Organon of Homœopathic Medicine.*

In discussing the claims of homœopathy, physicians should make themselves familiar with the views of the founder of the system, besides, the *Organon* is an important contribution to

the history of medical progress, and deserves the earnest attention of every student.

11. *Blane. Medical Logic.*

This excellent essay on the scientific method of reasoning in medicine is a good antidote to whatever pernicious the previous work may contain. Unlike most works on logic, there is not a dull page in the book.

12. *Holland. Medical Notes and Reflections.*

13. *Forbes. Nature and Art in Disease.*

14. *Bigelow. Nature in Disease.*

15. *Jackson. Letters to a Young Physician.*

16. *Holmes. Currents and Counter Currents.*

17. *Flint. Medical Essays.*

18. *Laycock. What to Observe at the Bedside and after Death.*

No young physician should fail to read the seven books whose titles are here set down. They comprise a history of the medical art at a most critical period of its transition.

19. *Hilton. On Rest and Pain.*

20. *Virchow. Cellular Pathology.*

Although these are books which may be characterised as "tools", yet their value to the physician is so great that we do not hesitate to place them on our list of books that should be read by all physicians.

21. *Gregory. On the Duties and Qualifications of a Physician.*

A series of lectures upon the dignity and responsibility of the physician's calling elevated in sentiment and tone.

22. *Gross. American Medical Biography.*

The medical biography of this country is a field in which there has been little gleaning. Dr. Gross' book is the only one accessible to the student.

23. *A History of Medicine.*

Since the History of Physick by Dr. Freind (London, 1726) no work seriously worthy of the name has appeared in English. Duglison's lectures will serve as a compend, but the book is unsatisfactory. Renouard's is fuller, but is bad in method and not well translated. For those who read German, Hæser's "Grundriss der Geschichte der Medicin" is an admirable book.

The above list is not very long, but it is fairly representative of the variations

in medical thought during twenty centuries. A diligent reader in the first years of practice, when professional duties are apt to be light should be able to get through with it in two years, and still leave time for the study of journals and text-books. We can assure our readers, from personal experience, that few occupations of a physician's leisure, will furnish more instruction and entertainment combined than an appreciative study of the great masters in medical literature.

DEAR DOCTOR :

The enclosed list is an attempt to indicate a series of books that all physicians should read. It appeared as an editorial in the MARYLAND MEDICAL JOURNAL for November 6th, 1886. We should be glad to have any suggestions or comments which would enable us to improve the list.

Very Respectfully Yours,

EDITORS MARYLAND MEDICAL JOURNAL,
BALTIMORE.

