

**MASTER-MINDS OF MEDICINE: II—THOMAS SYDENHAM,
THE ENGLISH HIPPOCRATES (1624-1689).**

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"As long as Almighty God shall give me life, I shall still press forward to my avowed end of doing all the good I can in my calling."—*Thomas Sydenham.*

Medicine is a practical science, and there are two open roads that lead great, thinking minds to a better understanding of it. Every doctor, in his daily routine work, comes upon these pleasant places, and recognizes the two strong currents of thought that tend to the perfection of a science which has made wonderful strides in advancement in past centuries and the present; currents of thought at once vital and important—the one scientific, the other practical, but both necessary to the solving of problems of real benefit to the great, throbbing humanity about us. We have, then, two schools in medicine—the scientific school, of which William Harvey was the founder, and the practical, or clinical, school represented by Thomas Sydenham. "The great merit of Sydenham," writes one, "was to proclaim the great truth that science was, is, and always must be incomplete; and that danger lurks in the natural tendency to act upon it as if it were complete. The practical man has to be guided not only by positive knowledge, but by much that is imperfectly known. He must listen to the hints of nature as well as to her clear utterances. To combine them may be difficult; but the difficulty is solved in minor matters by the faculty called common sense; in greater affairs, by the synthetic power of Genius."

Thomas Sydenham, then, the English Hippocrates, as he is sometimes called, occupies a unique place in the history of medicine. In the words of Horace—"medicus in omne aevum nobilis"—he was a physician famous for all time. Dr. John Brown, the essayist, calls him "the prince of practical physicians;" and it is said that Boerhaave, one of the most eminent teachers of medicine in Europe, never mentioned Sydenham without taking off his hat as a sign of respect and admiration.