

Andreas Vesalius.

BY

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Andreas Vesalius was born in Brussels on December 31, 1514. The history of earlier members of his family was enough to bring the study of medicine very near to his mind. His great great grandfather, great grandfather and grandfather were all physicians; and his father was an apothecary. He attended the University of Louvain and there showed himself strongly disposed to the study of anatomy by his frequent dissection of small animals. He then went to France, and in Paris continued his studies under Sylvius (Jacques Dubois) and others until his twentieth year. While still in his student days he wrote his book "De Humani Corporis Fabrica," being only eighteen years old at the time. He gave instruction to his fellow students at the age of twenty.

He returned to Louvain from Paris. It was at this time that he possessed himself of his first skeleton by stealing from the gallows the body of a criminal which had been stripped of all soft parts by birds.

Soon afterwards he became an army surgeon, but took up the work of teaching in his twenty-third year, when he was appointed by the Senate of Venice to the professorship of anatomy at Padua. He published his book "De Humani Corporis Fabrica" in 1543, though he had written it some ten or eleven years before. In the same year he was summoned to Belgium to be the chief physician of Charles V., then Emperor of Germany and King of Spain.

During his life at Court in Belgium and in Spain under Charles V. and Philip II., he fell into disfavour with others high in power, and finally left on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The reason for this action was avowedly a great offence, for he was charged with opening for post mortem investigation the body of a Spanish lady while life was not yet extinct. Other explanations less favourable to his opponent's good name are advanced.

He was recalled to the University of Padua from Palestine in 1564, and on the voyage was shipwrecked on the island of Zante and died from the effects of this accident.

Vesalius' work reformed the study of anatomy. He opposed the teachings of Galen without fear and thus incurred the hostility of his teacher Sylvius. Galen, for example, denied the existence of marrow in the bones of the head. Vesalius demonstrated its presence. Sylvius advanced the assumption that in the days of Galen the bones of the head were differently constructed. Vesalius refuted Galen's teaching on the existence of a bone in the heart and on the strong