

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS

THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE IN BRITAIN.

BY JOHN FERGUSON, M.A., M.D.

THE history of medicine is both fascinating and instructive, for by it one learns the steps which the healing art has taken in order to attain its present proud position. It is the history of medicine which points out the many mistakes that have been recorded, as well as the innumerable obstacles that have been overcome. These obstacles have been many and great, such as arose from the ignorance of the people, the superstitions of the times, the prejudices of religious sects, the lack of a knowledge of the laws of nature, and the absence of proper appliances for investigation. Gradually, one by one, these obstacles have been met and overcome, and it is with pride one can point to the many and signal advances which the science and practice of medicine have made through the achievement of British brains. It is the purpose of this article to set forth some of the claims of British medicine to recognition, and to indicate to what extent the science of medicine is indebted to the schools of medicine and the investigators of the British Isles.

Britain came into touch with Roman science at an early date. At the time when Roman rule held sway it is not unreasonable to think that some who had consulted Galen walked the streets of London. There is a fair amount of documentary evidence in existence to show that the thought and literature of London and Britain were influenced by Latin writers. Medicine had attained some distinction by the time of the Norman Conquest, which had the effect of bringing London into direct relationships with the progress of western Europe, and for more than a century foreign influences ruled in that city.

In 1193 a grant was made to St. Bartholomew's Hospital by John, Earl of Moreton, afterwards King John. At this time French influence affected the life of London to a great extent, and had an important bearing on the evolution of its hospitals. During this period the name of physicians are found in connection with various forms of charters. Grimbald, physician to Henry I, acts as a witness to several royal grants. He is styled in the body of these charters and grants as Grimaldo medico. One of these bears the date of 1105. Williams, Dean of St. Paul's, granted to John, the physician, and his heirs, some land and a residence in Aldmanbury. This is the earliest recorded abode of a physician in London. This would be about 1120. In 1127 Clarumbald appears as