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### AESCULAPIUS.\*

THE history of medicine has received very little attention from physicians, and yet its study is not merely of scientific value but an important source of practical information. To the layman it offers many features of interest. As an extensive branch of the general history of culture, it is indispensable to the historian of civilization. Its study permits the philosopher to see the influence of his predecessors upon medicine and the influence of medicine on philosophy—a reciprocal interest which still exists. For the theologian the history of medicine has a scientific value, for once on a time theology and medicine were intimately united. The scientists will find an interest in tracing the development of the various natural sciences which began as off-shoots of medicine. Finally a knowledge of the history of medicine gives the man of genuine education the best means of estimating medical ability and activity.

When we review the labor of thousands of years and follow the advance of our science in all its devious and tedious ways; when we find how little service has been rendered to the main object of medicine—the cure of disease—we are likely to be disappointed. For in spite of all therapeutics the statement of the Psalmist is still true: "As for man his days are as grass; as

a flower of the field so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone."

But if this department of medical science is well adapted to educate the physician in modesty, so also is it fitted to inspire him with just pride in his often-contested and self-sacrificing labors. The history of medicine may show the inadequacy of medical knowledge and its helplessness in struggling against the laws of nature, but it also brings to light the unwearied struggles of physicians of all ages to investigate those laws and to appropriate the knowledge acquired to the healing and blessing of suffering humanity. We prize infinitely less the fact that history, among almost all people, presents the immortal gods as the authors of medical art than that it teaches how mortal men have struggled continually after god-like aims,—the prevention, the cure, or at least the alleviation of the unavoidable heritage of woe and suffering imposed in so many ways upon us as created beings—even though to-day these aims have been imperfectly attained. The history of medicine shows how many noble men have served humanity, devoting strength and life to the sick, the feeble, the persecuted, the poor, the insane, and have led their fellow-men to lofty ideals in thought

\*An address by J. C. Connell, M. A., M.D., Dean of the Medical Faculty, at the opening of the Medical classes for the Session of 1904-'05.