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"BACK TO HIPPOCRATES!"

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"Life is short and Art long; the occasion fleeting;
experience fallacious and judgment difficult."

IT is a curious fact that Hippocrates, the author of these majestic words, the most rational thinker and observer of antiquity, should be so little known and read by those not only interested in the history of intellectual development, but also by those who desire to be thought cultured. Many to whom this terse saying, or, as Hippocrates himself called it, aphorism, represents the highest generalization that a life rich in experience can give, have either never heard of the author or are unaware that it is his, and to many further Hippocrates is at best but a legendary figure saved from oblivion by his being associated in the popular mind with the foundation of medicine.

It is not less remarkable that to the average, well educated physician of to-day the mention of his name recalls only the title of "Father of Medicine," conferred on him over twenty centuries ago. What he really did do, what part he played in the world of his day and what intellectual heritage he left, all this is as much unknown as if he had lived in a world cut off from our own.

The explanation lies in the fact that our modern learning, whether it is in the universities or in the field of science, is one-sided and very limited. Hippocrates is despised or neglected by the humanist, and especially the Grecian, because he wrote only on medicine and in the Ionic dialect, and by the scholar of science because he is commonly thought to have done only the work of a pioneer, and consequently, may be honored with brief notice or forgotten without loss to science.

It was not always so. In his own time and for at least the ten succeeding centuries Hippocrates was universally recognized not only as the final authority in medicine but also as a philosopher, man of science and writer of graceful, polished Greek, and even in the schools of the middle ages as well as amongst the scholars of the Arabian world he was regarded with almost as much veneration as was his junior Aristotle. From the latter we learn that he was, while living, styled Hippocrates the Great and Plato even mentioned him with respect, while Aristophanes in lampooning him paid him the only tribute that he gave Socrates, Pericles, Plato and all others just and unjust. In every Greek colony, as well as in Greece itself, his name was associated in the popular mind with all that is best in science and philosophy. This is reflected in a fragment of one of the lost plays of Euripides, which is held to refer to Hippocrates:

Happy the man who studies Nature's lore!
Him neither evil thoughts can e'er entice,
Nor party strife of angry citizens,
But pure in heart and hand he scans the face
Of her the Immortal Mother ever young.

After the tenth century his fame began to diminish, his writings to find few readers, and his name to pass current in the mediæval romances as that of a heathen demigod, or sorcerer, and as such, under the name of Ypocras, he is mentioned by Chaucer. When the intellectual rebirth, known as the Renaissance, occurred, it did not at once bring about the revival of that learning of which Hippocrates was the representative. The spirit of the Renaissance age was opposed to the study of Nature or of the physical world, literature as literature only was almost all that concerned it, and the science of the Greeks, except so far as Aristotle conveyed it, was consequently not revived. It was only after the culminating period of the Renaissance had passed, that is, after the commencement of the seventeenth century, that Hippocrates' writings were again brought before the world, but his full revival only took place in the seventeenth century when edition after edition of his works began to come from the press. In that century as many as seventy editions of his "Prognostics," and over three hundred of his "Aphorisms" appeared. All this resulted from the stimulus of the cry: "Back to Hippocrates," and amongst those who obeyed it was Sydenham (1624-1689) who, by adopting the precepts and methods of Hippocrates, laid the foundation of modern medicine.

But this did not bring back the humanist, the student of intellectual progress or the historian of civilization. In their estimate of the Greek mind and its achievements they overlooked or ignored Hippocrates and thus but half conceived what was involved in Greek civilization. That curious, perhaps one may describe it contemptuous, attitude still prevails, and it thus happens that he who had won the admiration of his contemporaries, Plato, Socrates and Aristotle, is beneath the notice of a Porson or a Jowett.

It is, nevertheless, in Hippocrates that the humanist, the physician, the historian of morals and the student of intellectual development can find a common point of sympathy. If the humanist will recognize that Hippocrates attained an enlightenment that is not reflected in the other literature of the fifth and fourth centuries his views as to what Greek life and culture involved will