

of the leading masters of surgery of the day, and at another relegated to quacks and travelling rupture curers, who alone kept them from falling into utter oblivion, until under the new stimulus caused by the great discoveries of anesthesia and antiseptics, they were again revived and elaborated.

While we find occasional reference to hernia and its treatment in the writings of the early Greeks, the first recorded description of an attempt to cure the condition by operation was made by Celsus, a Roman who lived during the first half of the first century, A.D., and to him must be given the honor of being the founder of the radical cure of non-strangulated hernia. Although we do not possess a careful description of his method, we know that he possessed a very good conception of the anatomical and pathological conditions present, and that he actually proposed and successfully executed many of the steps which even to-day form the most important features of modern methods.

His operation consisted in a free open incision over the hernial tumor, exposure of the sac, and probably the removal of the whole or a part of the sac. If the omentum was present it was pushed back if possible; if not, a needle was passed through the middle and it was then tied off in two portions. The wound was then, closed by sutures. The testis was not removed, and care was taken not to injure the cord in the dissection of the sac. At that time this procedure must have been regarded as radical to the degree of rashness, and we are surprised to find in his rules for the selection of cases for operation evidence of such sound judgment and rational conservatism.

He operated only upon children between the ages of six and fourteen years, and, moreover, only in subjects in good health with comparatively small herniæ, as he recognized the fact that these cases are the most likely to withstand the risks of operation, and, furthermore, that in them the chances of ultimate cure are greater than in any other class of cases. He advised against operating upon umbilical hernia in children, knowing what many surgeons to-day have failed to learn, viz., that umbilical hernia in children is almost without exception cured by nature, without operation. Heliodorus, who flourished under Trajan, at the beginning of the second century, has given us a description of a method of operation for hernia which actually surpasses many that are now offered to the profession as new and ideal. He says,\* "We must cut off the hernial sac with great care, for if you take away less than is protruded the result will be the production of a new hernia. In order, therefore, that we may not miss excising an amount that is precisely correct it is necessary to draw the sac outward by catching the tip. So soon as the edges of the abdominal wound begin to be averted, enough of the peritoneum has been drawn out, and so much is to be excised. When just enough peritoneum has been

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\* Albert Lehrbuch der Chirurg, B. III., and Halsted, *Bulletin Johns Hopkins Hospital*, No. 29, 1893.