The Doctor in Literature

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I am profoundly impressed by the magnitude of my charge in attempting to introduce to you the many physicians who have contributed to the enrichment of literature. So great is the undertaking I can only approach it in the spirit of the Controller Colonne who, when asked by Queen Marie Antoinette to perform a difficult task, replied: "If it be only difficult, it is done; if it be impossible, it shall be done."

In surveying my subject, two facts were immediately apparent. First, I found that there are an amazingly large number of doctors whose efforts in the field of literature rank on an equal plane with those of the purely literary type and second, I discovered that in most of the famous literary groups or clubs there were doctors who could hold their ground against the wit and brilliance of their contemporary bookish friends.

Dr. Arbuthnot had his Swift, Pope, Gay, Addison and Steele; Dr. Goldsmith his Sam Johnson, Burke and Boswell; and Dr. Holmes his Lowell, Whittier, Longfellow and Emerson.

But go back many hundreds of years before the time of these men, and you come across the most famous and distinguished group of them all, the four apostles; and here again we find a doctor among them—Luke, the most widely-read writer of the medical profession.

A collaborator of the best seller of all time he occupies a unique position among doctors who have gained distinction for their contributions to literature. St. Luke, "The Beloved Physician," was the historian of the early Christian Church and of the four writers of the Gospel he wrote in the purest Greek. His writings reveal powers of observation as befit a man trained in the science of medicine and in his books are many references to the healing of the sick. Little is known of the man Luke. It is presumed that he studied in the school of Alexandria and that he was familiar with the Aesculapian temples of healing. In his time the practice of medicine was largely in the hands of priest-

1 Read before the Nebraska Writer's Guild, Lincoln, Nebraska, May 12, 1934.
physicians but Luke was not a priest and it is fair to assume that he was a disciple of Hippocrates—the founder of rational medicine who lived five centuries before his time.

Thomas Linacre was a practicing physician in London, a man of letters and in later years an ordained minister. He was a consummate scholar of Greek and is credited with having given to Oxford the distinction of being the home of Greek learning. English literature had declined with the death of Chaucer, and Linacre together with John Colet, William Grocyn and William Latimer, comprising a brilliant circle of Oxford scholars, contributed largely to its revival. Linacre's greatest task was the translation of the works of Galen and Aristotle from the original Greek. "He sought to restore to English medicine the uncorrupted spirit of Greece" (Osler). The medical profession of England honors him as the founder of the College of Physicians. Henry VII, Cardinal Woolsey, Archbishop Warham, Bos, Lily, Erasmus and Bishop Fox were his patients and among his friends were Prince Arthur, Queen Mary, William Lillyle, Colet, and Sir Thomas More.

Once physician to the city of Metz but far more renowned as the author of Pantagruel and Gargantua, François Rabelais was neither a Medievalist nor, strictly speaking, a product of the Renaissance. He was rather an intermediary between the two periods—lacking in the culture and refinement of the latter school, yet only too willing to ridicule and exploit the hypocrisy, pedantry and artificial restraint of the former.

As a youth in a Franciscan monastery at the turn of the 16th century, Rabelais found himself growing more and more disgusted with his colleagues' petty metaphysical quarrels, with their insistence upon studying dead topics in dead languages, with their hypocritical asceticism. He wanted to breathe, to escape from his stagnant, quarrelsome, dog-eat-dog surroundings.

"He had had over 30 years of it," as Burton Roscoe has pointed out. "Thirty years, in cloister and monkery, in ecclesiastical college and in medical college, as secretary to an ignorant but astute and intriguing bishop, as medical attendant upon a harassed and ailing cardinal, as an editor of learned works and as a proofreader of unreadable ones—and he was tired of it. It all came out of him—all that was pent up in him—in two titanic
hinges, two gargantuan debauches of the mind," Pantagruel and Gargantua.

And never before or since has there been such a binge of joyful freedom, of rollicking satire, of garrulous nonsense, or ribald, salacious humor. Banned by the Church council for their smut, his books have little or no continuity, but they served so to stimulate and amuse a stifled society that no estimate of literature's great humorists and satirists can be made without saving a foremost place for Rabelais, the merry, mad monk-doctor.

Although fewer in number than in the field of literature, doctors have attained much more exalted heights in the realm of philosophy.

One physician, John Locke, with his "Essay on Human Understanding," changed the entire philosophic thought of Europe at the turn of the eighteenth century. And another, William James, an American with typical American practicality, headed the school of pragmatism which has accomplished much in bringing philosophy down from the clouds of conjecture to the more secure footing of extreme rationalism.

Oliver Wendell Holmes tells us of "a certain ancilla culinaria vergo—which I am afraid would in those days have been translated kitchen-wench, instead of lady of the culinary department—who turned Locke off after she had got tired of him, and called in another practitioner. This helped, perhaps, to spoil a promising doctor, and make an immortal metaphysician. At any rate, Locke laid down the professional wig and cane, and took to other studies."

Few philosophers have exerted a more enduring influence over the intellectual world than John Locke. His fidelity to truth and his cogent logic; his vivacity and his originality have set him apart from the many philosophers who "say nothing in such a way that it cannot be known that nothing has been said."

In Locke's patient devotion to detailed investigation we find a quality that reminds us of Darwin's most marked characteristic. He was, more than any other one man, the pioneer in the psychology of experience and the study of the nature and limits of consciousness. He tried hard to remove every mystery from the nature of human reason. Because innate ideas, the eternal truths of Descartes, his distinguished predecessor, were myste-
vious, Locke threw them overboard and ended with the conclusion that it is experience and experience alone that writes everything on the blank tablet of the mind.

This apparently naive conclusion caused a great European controversy, and from it sprang the philosophic movement from Locke through Leibnitz, through the wonderful Berkeley, through the ingenious, fearless and doubting Hume, to Kant himself—and European thought was transformed.

It is not only among the utilitarians but among the pragmatists of today that one must look for the direct posterity of Locke.

Chief of these is William James, who, like his brother, Henry, took an early turn toward psychology during his school years in France under the tutelage of the great psychiatrist Charcot. It is said that Henry wrote novels like psychology, while William wrote psychology like novels.

Educated in the French school of clarity, James abominated the vague and obscure methods of German metaphysics, for he was essentially a practical man, albeit a philosopher. On his return to America, he felt the stimulation of a young, aggressive, hopeful nation, and he so well caught the American spirit that he was lifted to heights of popularity no other American philosopher has ever attained.

Much of this can be explained by the fact that he reversed the usual philosophic procedure of starting with an idea and working backwards through metaphysics to its source. James, however, despite precedent, felt it much more to the point to find out what happens to an idea, not where it came from. And from this fresh observation arose the pragmatic school whose simple, practical dictum is that, "to be true, an idea must work."

A typical example of James clarity of thought and style is his definition of philosophy as "only thinking about things in the most comprehensive possible way."

The turn of the 17th century brought a turbulent activity to England and the high excitement of the times left not even medicine untouched for, before Cromwell's great heart and bloody hand were stilled, she had produced a dozen first-rate scientists and two of her greatest literary masterpieces. The "Anatomy of Melancholy" and the "Religio Medici" were published in 1621 and 1642 respectively.
Thomas Browne who made "the harmony between the physician and the man of letters complete," was born in 1605, educated at Oxford, Padua, Montpellier, Leyden; knighted in 1671, and buried in 1682—more famous for his literary work than for his medical achievements, although for 45 years he had been an efficient practitioner in Norwich and an honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians. His extensive education produced a really extraordinary breadth of interests, as his writings show, and all his life he solemnly studied archaeology, natural history, botany, magic and languages. The existing portraits of him and the few remaining contemporary descriptions, such as that of Whitefoot, reveal a gentle quiet soul. The "Enquiry into Vulgar Errors," "The Urn Burial," "The Garden of Cyprus" and "Christian Morals," indicate a preoccupation with the past rather than an interest in the living, though he does once refer to the "horrid murther" of Charles the First and to Cromwell as an usurper.

His *Religio Medici* is like the man that wrote it, open to criticism and yet a priceless heritage. An uneven, often obscure, erudite collection of unrelated reflections written in what Coleridge justly condemns as the "hyperlatinism" of his day it has yet a majesty, a humility, a charming wisdom in it that made Lowell speak of the author as "our most imaginative mind since Shakespeare." As the title indicates, it is the statement of his belief, a record of his faith in God, in his fellow men and in himself, so gently, so sanely, so beautifully drawn that the greatest of modern physicians, Sir William Osler, cherished his precious copy to the end of his days.

Considered so heretical in its day that the Roman Church placed it on its *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, the true devotion of a creedless Christian shines from every page. Who but such a man could have penned these typical lines: "—yet, at my devotion, I love to use the civility of my knee, my hat, and my hand, with all those outward and sensible motions which may express or promote my invisible devotion." "I can dispense with my hat at the sight of a cross, but scare with the thought of my Saviour."

"In brief, where the Scripture is silent the Church is my text; where that speaks it is but my comment. When there is a joint
silence of both, I borrow not the rules of my religion from Rome or Geneva, but from the dictates of my own reason."

But it is not all easy reading. As Symonds says—"It requires a certain exercise of taste to apprehend his beauties, and a patience of the intellect to sympathize with his peculiar moods. He deals with obsolete and unfamiliar problems; he propounds riddles which no living Oedipus would care to solve; he ponders oftentimes on nugatory or fastidious questions, investing trifles with a dignity and splendor not their own. His noblest passages lie wedged like lumps of gold in masses of hard barren quartz; and the contemplations which awake his most ethereal fancy are such as few would pause to dwell upon. Wrecks of forgotten fables, antediluvian computations, names sculptured on the pyramids, or nameless urns consigned by hands unknown to alien soil, the influences of the stars, the occult potencies of herbs, interpretations of irrelevant dreams, fine disputations on theologies of schoolmen, conjectures of the soul's state before birth and after death—all things, in short that are vague, impalpable, and charged with spiritual symbolism, this man loves to brood on."

There is no evidence, I believe, that Browne ever met Robert Burton though he may have seen this melancholy man taking his solitary way about the cloisters of Christ Church or wandering on the river bank to laugh at the ribaldry of the bargemen, confessedly his one sure amusement. This is a pity for they might have found each other congenial; both "smell of the lamp" and their printed works have much of the same devious oblique approach to life. Burton was elected a Student of Christ Church in 1599 and there he lived the rest of his days, as he says, "a silent, sedentary, private life," having and wanting little except wisdom, a spectator of life to the end.

The excuse for placing Burton in this list of authors is a valid one for, although he was a divine and a tutor, and no doctor, the "Anatomy of Melancholy" is genuinely a medical book. His mother was apparently a skillful administrator of herbs and this early interest in disease colored all his subsequent studies to the extent that his pages are literally studded with medical references on the most astounding variety of subjects.

But an intellectual patronage is scarcely sufficient excuse for
entering an alien field and Burton, realizing that some may resent his intrusion, makes his own complete apology. A constant victim of melancholia he seeks "the hair of the dog that bit him," so to speak, and undertakes this vast consideration of the disease as a means of escape from it, as others have done before him, and since. The hastiest perusal of the book will convince anyone that the task was exhaustive and, some will say, exhausting.

It consists first of a long introduction in which he proves that most men are mad by an incredible number of instances of human folly gathered from every conceivable source, ancient and modern; the pages literally groan under their burden, but interspersed are many of his own sensible suggestions for the solution of such contemporary problems as the tariff, the improvement of roads and rivers, old age pensions, etc., as well as an occasional and all too rare story or anecdote. Needless to say, there is also his own sketch of Utopia.

The reading is heavy, far more so than Browne, and one must have patience if he is to catch the power and the occasional beauty of the man. The vast panorama cannot be assimilated without some mental indigestion, but there are human beings there and many a vigorous picture. As Osler has so typically written—"kings and queens in their greatness and in their glory, in their madness and in their despair; generals and conquerors with their ambitions and their activities; the princes of the church in their pride and their shame; philosophers of all ages, now rejoicing in the power of their intellect, and again grovelling before the idols of the tribe; the heroes of the race who have fought the battle of the oppressed in all lands; criminals, small and great, from the petty thief to Nero with his unspeakable atrocities; the great navigators and explorers with whom Burton traveled so much in map and card, and whose stories were his delight; the martyrs and the virgins of all religions, the deluded and fanatics of all theologies; the possessed of devils and the possessed of God; the beauties, frail and faithful, the Lucretias and the Helens, all were there. The lovers, old and young; the fools who were accounted wise, and the wise who were really fools the madmen of all history, to anatomize whom is the special object of the book; the world itself, against which he brings a railing accusation—the motley procession of humanity sweeps be-
fore us on his stage, a fantastic but fascinated medley at which he does not know whether to weep or to laugh.”

Dr. Samuel Garth was the only physician member of the famous “Kit-Kat Club,” one of the innumerable coffee-houses where gentlemen of London used “to meet under certain conditions”; its membership was limited to 48 and contained such names as Marlborough, Robert Walpole, Godolphin, Addison and Steele, Vanbrugh and Kneller. Garth was late in returning from the “Kit-Kat Klub” and when upbraided for neglecting his patients replied: “Nine of them have such bad constitutions, that all the physicians in the world can’t save them; and the other six have such good constitutions, that all the physicians in the world can’t kill them.” From the anecdotes about him he seems to have loomed large in those spacious times.

After studying at Leyden he received the M.D. degree from Cambridge in 1691 and began a brilliant career in London. He must have been conspicuous very early for within 6 years he had been chosen to deliver both the Gulstonian Lecture and the Harveian Oration; later he was made the King’s Physician in Ordinary, Physician General to the Army and was knighted with Marlborough’s sword. Rich, affable, witty, worldly and kind he was apparently an enormously popular figure, as able in politics and literature as in medicine. At least that is the conclusion to be drawn from the facts that the Whigs looked to him for leadership, that Pope and Addison, among others, praised his poetry, and that his list of patients was a most distinguished one. And best of all, probably, Johnson tells us, possibly inaccurately, that he delivered Dryden’s funeral oration from the top of a beer barrel with “much good nature” until the barrel head caved in.

His literary reputation rests entirely upon a poem called “The Dispensary,” issued in broadside form in 1699, which scored such a success that it went through 10 editions within the next 20 years. This was a pure piece of propaganda for the appreciation of which some understanding of the medical situation of the times is necessary. The dispensing of drugs was then so loosely regulated that even grocers and pepperers were permitted to do so; apothecaries were scarcely better qualified for the privilege; and both were, under certain restrictions, legalized to perform phle-
botomy and other semi-surgical procedures. Since even the most orthodox medical practice was almost entirely empirical, so much so that the famous Dr. Mead used to receive apothecaries twice daily in his favorite coffee house for the purpose of selling them prescriptions at a half-guinea each without even seeing the patients, one may readily imagine that the apothecaries offered strong and direct competition to the regular physicians and that much quackery flourished. Conditions indeed became so scandalous that in 1617 an act was passed which separated the apothecaries from their old companions the grocers and placed them under the direct control of the College of Physicians. Naturally this only aggravated the situation and things went steadily from bad to worse until 1688 when the College voted to establish a laboratory or pharmacy where drugs could be dispensed to the poor at a fair price. To this the apothecaries howled that the College was embarking on a money-making scheme of its own, and succeeded in stirring up so much opposition, both within and without the College, that nearly everyone found himself either a Dispensarian or an Anti-Dispensarian. These were the days of much pamphlet writing and Grub Street became the main battle-ground.

Into this paper warfare Garth hurled his bolt at the enemies of the College in the form of his long poem in 6 cantos. It is written in the fashionable mock-heroic couplets of the day and is so full of contemporary allusions in classical disguise that it has little meaning for the modern reader, but the wit and skill are still apparent and the ridicule it directs towards the Anti-Dispensarians must have been devastating. Its literary merit may be debated but critics do agree that Garth introduced Pope to the metrical technic of Boileau to the lasting benefit of English literature, and lavish praises were heaped upon him by such as Steele, Gay, Walpole, and Pope, the latter remarking in The Dunciad that—“. . . we too boast our Garth and Addison.”

In John Arbuthnot we find a leader of one of those schools, or groups of famous writers, that are the mile-stones by which we judge and know English literature.

With the exceptions of the Elizabethans and the Victorians, Arbuthnot and his group were perhaps more typical of their time than any other school. The Queen Anne period was one of ar-
tificiality, of shallow social standards, a powder puff era that smelled of starch and reeked with hypocrisy. It was an ideal stage setting for the entrance of the most potent group of satirists the world has ever seen.

In the writings of Johnathan Swift, Alexander Pope and John Gay, we find sledge-hammer blows as well as good-natured jabs, all directed at the superficiality of the age. Addison and Steele likewise poked their fun, but in a restrained manner, at the faults and foibles of their fellow-citizens. So powerful were their pens and so lasting have been their writings, that when one mentions satire today, we immediately think back to the early years of the eighteenth century, when prime ministers and bishops, and even the queen herself, recoiled from the attacks of these men.

Few people, however, realize the importance of Dr. Arbuthnot's position among this group. To school-children he is known only as the recipient of Pope's most famous letter; and to grown-ups hardly at all.

Although his writings were few and relatively unimportant, Arbuthnot was the leader of the Martin Scriblerus Club, whose roster contained the names of all these satirists. It was a dining club, and over their cups of coffee these writers plotted many a literary jibe to taunt their contemporaries.

Arbuthnot's position in the club can best be described by the words of his contemporaries themselves: "O, if the world had but a dozen Arbuthnots in it, I would burn my travels," wrote Dean Swift in a letter to Pope immediately preceding the publication of his Gulliver's Travels, the most damning indictment ever directed at mankind.

And Johnson himself, in his "Lives of the English Poets," said of him, "A man estimable for his learning, amiable for his life, and venerable for his piety. Arbuthnot was a man of great comprehension, skillful in his profession, versed in the sciences, acquainted with ancient literature, and able to animate his mass of knowledge by a bright and active imagination; a scholar with great brilliance of wit; a wit, who, in the crowd of life, retained and discovered a noble ardour of religious zeal."

Tobias Smollett failed in the practice of medicine, not for lack of scientific attainments but because of an irascible temper
and we find him turning to letters where as a satirist and censor of manners he was unrestrained and unafraid. As reviewer, translator, historian, poet and pamphleteer he “fought endless literary battles, and braved and wielded for years the cudgels of controversy. It was a hard and savage fight in those days, and a niggard pay . . . you see, somehow, that he is a gentleman, through all his battling and struggling, his poverty, his hard fought successes, and his defeats” (Thackeray).

Hume remarked that Smollett was like a cocoanut—rough outside, but full of human kindness within. “Roderick Random” is the most popular of his novels; “In spite of its indecency the world at once acknowledged it as a work of genius.” His “Humphrey Clinker” is rated by Thackeray as the most laughable story that has ever been written since the goodly art of novel-writing began. In spite of a life of struggle, adventure and quarreling Smollett, at his best, ranks with the immortals.

Erasmus Darwin, physician, poet and philosopher of the eighteenth century, was the grandfather of Charles Darwin, whose famous treatise on evolution struck like a bombshell in the ranks of the Victorian fundamentalists. Erasmus was endowed with the same spirit of research that characterized his illustrious grandson. For his “Botanic Gardens,” an imaginative and splendidly descriptive poem, he received £900—a fabulous sum in those days. It is said to have been “the funniest earnest book in the English language,” in which the author revealed his poetical and philosophical genius, together with an originality that was little short of sensational.

Goldsmith first prepared for the ministry but was rejected for ordination; then he resolved to try law but he gambled away the fifty pounds given him by his uncle for the purpose and his resolution went for naught; finally he matriculated in Edinburgh and succeeded in obtaining a medical degree but he never seriously engaged in the practice of medicine. The first twenty-seven years of his life were spent without serious intent and there were but nineteen years left for his career in letters for Goldsmith died at the early age of forty-six.

Like the great majority of humorous and satirical writers found in English history, Oliver Goldsmith was a native Irishman. His fame is based, not upon a savage wit like Swift’s nor
upon a satirical hardness like Shaw's, but rather upon a sympathetic understanding and tenderness for his fellow-men.

Although Goldsmith belonged to no school, he is almost as well-known to us as Samuel Johnson, and largely through the same agency, the writings of Boswell. He is portrayed in the "Life of Johnson" as the second shining light of the Literary Club and the only one who dared bait its leader. Often Johnson bore down his adversary by sheer weight of intellect but more frequently, the biography shows, Goldsmith danced about his friend and, with rapid thrusts of wit, disarmed him, as on the occasion when he doubted Johnson's ability to write a fable because he would inevitably make the little fishes talk like whales.

Goldsmith was always in difficulties, either monetary or social, difficulties which can be traced either to his inherent generosity or to his blind trust in mankind. Whether tramping penniless through Europe with his flute or selling his masterpieces on Fleet Street, he never gave thought for tomorrow. One of his chief charms is the characteristic manner in which he threw himself upon life with the abandonment of a child.

Goldsmith is unique in that he has written masterpieces, or near masterpieces, in four different literary media. His essays in "The Citizen of the World," though like Addison's, often directed against the faults and absurdities of mankind, have a tenderness which strikes deeper than Addison's mildness, a note of kinship and understanding that differs widely from "The Spectator's" aloofness.

In the field of poetry, Goldsmith, though writing in the same meter as Pope, has none of his predecessor's cold detachment. Instead he shows a warm interest and sensitiveness to remote, obscure and unfortunate phases of life in his two great poems, "The Deserted Village" and "The Traveller." To my mind there is no poem in the English language so universally known and loved as "The Deserted Village."

Goldsmith reveals his true self in his joyous, rollicking comedy, "She Stoops to Conquer" which he reputedly based upon one of his boyhood experiences when he himself spent a night in a private home, mistaking it for an inn. So delightfully comic is this play of his that its run has lasted with frequent interruptions for more than 150 years.
The fourth field of literary effort which Goldsmith mastered is the novel, and though he sold his manuscript of "The Vicar of Wakefield" to free himself from his unpaid landlady, his novel stands today, not only as one of the first true English novels, but also as one of the finest.

Dr. John Brown of Edinburgh was a student and assistant of the famous surgeon Syme. His spare time was occupied by writing, which he did with a humor and pathos that endeared him to his readers. His stories of men and dogs and places, of Marjorie Fleming, and perhaps best of all, of Rab and His Friends, are all written in a charming, gossipy style, deliciously flavored with Scotticism.

No one who has read Rab and His Friends can forget the guardian of the wain of the Howgate carrier; that "compressed Hercules of a dog" who won the admiration and friendship of the author by a display of the three cardinal virtues of a dog (or of a man for that matter)—courage, endurance and skill; how the friendship between Rab and John continued throughout John's student days and hospital residency, and the death watch at the bedside of Rab's mistress as she lay in the ward with the faithful husband, John and Rab at her side.

To the medical profession Oliver Wendell Holmes is best known as a teacher of anatomy; to the general reader as the "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" but to him belongs the credit of having made one of the most signal pronouncements in the history of medicine. Reading before the Boston Society for Medical Improvement, in 1843, Holmes charged the medical profession with the responsibility of the spread of infection among childbearing women. This essay on the "Contagiousness of Puerperal Fever" was a damning indictment and aroused bitter opposition among leaders in the medical profession. Puerperal fever had for ages taken a frightful toll in the lives of mothers in childbirth and Holmes fearlessly laid the responsibility for the spread of the contagion upon the doctor. Said he: "When, by the permission of Providence, I held up to the professional public the damnable facts connected with the conveyance of poison from one mother's chamber to another—for doing which humble office I desire to be thankful that I have lived, though nothing else shall ever come to life—I had to bear the sneers of those whose
position I had assailed, and, as I believe, have at last demolished, so that nothing but the ghosts of dead women stir among the ruins. The pestilence carrier of the lying-in chamber must look to God for pardon for man will never forgive him.” This passage reveals Holmes, the physician and scientist. But there is another Holmes; the brilliant conversationalist who loved his friends Lowell, Agassiz and Wyman, who lived among his books and was proud of his Boston; Holmes the poet, the essayist and the novelist. We admire him for his satire, his humor and his amusing caricatures of manners. Much as he wrote of the foibles and follies of human nature, no one ever winced under his pen for he was the kindliest of Autocrats. He is remembered as a thoughtful observer of men and things who wrote in pure, classical English with a rare quality of wit and humor. Not so great as his contemporaries and associates in the celebrated Saturday Club—Whittier, Lowell, Emerson and Longfellow “but worthy to be classed with them.” It is said that he wrote for sixty years and retained his youth till well into his eighties.

The “Breakfast Table Series” finds Holmes at his best. On every page the author stands out as a kindly, clever, observing philosopher who saw human nature through professional spectacles. Said Theodore Thornton: “The autocrat, the Professor, and Elsie Venner are a series of clinics. The patient is not often in bed, but he is undergoing pathological examination; and a good part of the interest in these books lies in the fact that whatever is seen and said comes from a keen-eyed physician.”

Holmes, the autocrat, suffered no delusions in his psychological analyses of the average American. Said he: “Our American atmosphere is vocal, with a flippant loquacity of half-knowledge and half-knowledge dreads nothing but whole knowledge. How could a people which has a revolution once in four years, which has contrived the bowie knife, the revolver, which has chewed the juice of all the superlatives in the language of Fourth of July orations, and so used up its epithets in the rhetoric of abuse that it takes two great quarto dictionaries to supply its demands; which insists in sending out yachts and horses and boys to out-sail, out-run, out-fight, and checkmate all the rest of creation; how could such a people be content with any but heroic practice? What wonder that the stars and stripes wave over doses of 90
grains of quinine and that the American Eagle screams with delight to see 180 grains of calomel given at a single mouthful.”

A year after his graduation in medicine Holmes wrote “Old Ironsides” in protest against the destruction of the frigate Constitution. The stanzas were published in the Boston Advertiser and Holmes was started on his way to fame. At the age of forty-eight he began his contributions to The Atlantic Monthly, then edited by Lowell. It was here that “The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table” was introduced to the public, soon to be followed by “The Professor of the Breakfast Table” and “Over the Teacups.” In all this Holmes was “universally interesting” because he was “universally interested” and this, says William Dean Howells, was the secret of his charm. He was a wit but his wit “ne’er carried a heart strain away on its blade.” “Habits are the crutches of old age,” said Holmes and his was the habit of cheerfulness which he carried with him into the eighties.

Holmes did not make a marked success of the practice of medicine for he learned that “a man who writes poetic ditties must not write prescriptions. To be a wit was bad enough; to be a poet, worse. Better be a rascal or hard drinker and have some bond of sympathy with your few patients.” There was, however, consolation for Holmes in recalling that Haller lost his election as physician to the hospital in his native city because he, too, was a poet. His poems consume three hundred double column pages and of all we best recall Old Ironsides, The Last Leaf, The Wonderful One-Horse Shay, The Broomstick Train, Grandmother’s Story of Bunker Hill Battle, The Chambered Nautilus and Homesick in Heaven.

In the field of historical romance Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell holds a conspicuous place. From his early youth he aspired to a literary career but he lived at his time when the public looked with disfavor upon a doctor who indulged in avocations apart from his profession so he yielded to the advice of Oliver Wendell Holmes to first establish his reputation as a practitioner of medicine before embarking upon a literary career. Having acquired an eminent position as a psychiatrist, beginning at the age of fifty-three, he devoted a large share of his time to verse and fiction. He wrote psychological stories which only a man of his profes-
sional attainments could write but they lacked the appeal of his historical romances. Living in Philadelphia it is but natural that he would turn to the Revolutionary period and we find him at his best in “Hugh Wynne Free Quaker Sometimes Brevet Lieutenant Colonel on the Staff of his Excellency General Washington,” “The Youth of Washington Told in the Form of an Autobiography,” and “The Red City, a Novel of the Second Administration of President Washington.” Had Weir Mitchell not been so eminent in his profession he would have had a larger place in letters.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was born and educated in Scotland. After graduating in medicine in the University of Edinburgh he made his first adventure as surgeon of the whaler Hope in the Arctic and later journeyed on a trading vessel along the west coast of Africa. He then settled in Southsea where he practiced medicine, writing short stories in his “all too numerous leisure hours.”

It was “Micah Clarke” that brought fame to Conan Doyle but it was “The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes” that sustained his long and successful career as a writer of mystery stories. The demand for these stories was tremendous—everywhere the public clamored for them. “The Whale Company,” “Sir Nigel,” “The Tragedy of the Korsoko,” “The Hound of the Baskerville,” “The Stark Munro Letters,” “Round the Red Lamp” and many others appeared in rapid succession and were eagerly devoured by the public. His later writings were of adventures, history, travel and spiritualism. His interest in spiritualism was intensified by the death of his son in the World War and in this fantasy he was the most plausible exponent.

Dr. Charles MacLauren was incapacitated in his professional activities as a result of illness acquired in the World War. In his forced retirement he turned to letters, writing largely of medico-historical subjects, maintaining the theory that the actions of great men are largely influenced by their state of health. His “Post Mortem,” published in 1923, and his “Mere Mortals,” published in 1931, were based upon this hypothesis. Lives of great men, said he, are best studied through the medium of disease and he cites many instances where illness or infirmity has turned the course of human events. He analyzes the recorded clinical data of such characters as Dr. Johnson, King Henry
VIII, Martin Luther, Mary Tudor, Queen Elizabeth, Frederick
the Great, many of whom, in the opinion of MacLauren, suffered
from strange maladies while others suffered from disabilities
common to this day. Spinoza the philosopher had tuberculosis,
Nietzsche had migraine, Martin Luther suffered from Ménieré's
disease which caused dizziness, and dreadful noises in the head,
Henry VIII had syphilis followed by mental, physical and moral
decay, as did Ivan the Terrible, and Dr. Johnson was a psychas-
thenic which accounts for his gloomy disposition.

It may be truly said of Sir William Osler that he was the
most widely known and beloved physician in the world, "a scholar
without pedantry, a scientist without pretention, a wit without
venom, a humorist without scorn." (Stanley Hall). Dr. Harvey
Cushing's two volume work on "The Life of Sir William Osler"
is dedicated to medical students in the hope that they may catch
something of the spirit of the man. Osler rarely betrayed his
inmost feelings by a show of sentiment but once on a very special
occasion he referred to his associations with the profession, the
public and his friends in Canada and the United States. Said
he, "I take upon myself to witness, that in my sojourn with you —

I have loved no darkness,
Sophisticated no truth,
Nursed no delusion,
Allowed no fear."

Of all the honors heaped upon Osler, (and no man of medi-
cine was ever more honored) his election to the "Dr. Johnson
Club" thrilled him most. Only six medical men had ever been
admitted to this most famous of dining clubs; they were Gold-
smith, Fordyce, Nugent, Banke, Vaughan and Holland. The
seventieth birthday of Osler, then Regius Professor of Medicine
at Oxford, was an occasion of international felicitation—truly
a verification of the prophetic words of Oliver Wendell Holmes:
"To be seventy years young is sometimes far more cheerful and
hopeful than to be forty years old." Recalling his vagrant career
of three score years and ten, when a student in Toronto, Montreal,
London, Berlin and Vienna, when a teacher in Montreal, Phila-
delphia, Baltimore and Oxford, he said with Ulysses: "I am a
part of all that I have met."
Osler, who had done so much to advance the science of medicine, who had contributed so liberally to literature and to the humanities, was laid to rest in Lady Chapel, wrapped in the scarlet gown of Oxford and on his bier a single sheaf of lilies, together with his beloved copy of Religio Medici. Through the “watching chamber” there passed in the fancy of Harvey Cushing, his pupil and biographer, “the spirits of many old and young—of former and modern times”—of scientists, philosophers, writers; “of the younger men, his pupils who had gone before.”

For lack of time we can only recall John Keats, the melancholy romanticist of English poetry; Samuel Smiles for his teachings in sound morality, in “Thrift,” in “Character” and in “Self Help”; William Somerset Maugham, novelist and dramatist, whose “Of Human Bondage” has won him enduring fame; Warwick Deeping, author of “Sorrel and Son,” which portrays father and son in bonds of perfect devotion and understanding; Francis Brett Young remembered for his “Deep Sea” and “The Portrait of Clare”; James Charles Lever for his “Charles O’Malley,” “Jack Hunter,” “Tom Burke of Ours” and “Roland Cashel”; R. MacNair Wilson’s story of the life of Sir James Mackenzie, “The Beloved Physician,” Halladay Sutherland’s “The Arches of the Years,” Henry Rowland’s “Pearl Island” and “Many Mansions”; and lastly Axel Martin Munthe in San Michele who, with an irony sharper than a surgeon’s knife, unfolds the story of human suffering, human foibles and human beings in a most entertaining if not convincing manner; revealing the mind of one schooled in psychology, who through long years of medical practice knows people at their best and their worst.

Then there were the English poet-physicians of the 17th and 18th centuries—Henry Vaughan, writer of devotional verse; Sir Richard Blackmore, a heavy and columnus poetaster, damned as “a good and well-meaning man”; Mark Akenside, writer of didactic poems of whom Smollett said he undertakes to give an entertainment after the manner of the ancients; Robert Bridges, the poet laureate, and George Crabbe, praised by Dr. Johnson, Scott, Wordsworth and Byron, whose humor so charmed Jane Austen that she was heard to say that if she were ever to marry she could fancy herself Mrs. Crabbe. And we would not fail to pay tribute to the Canadian, Dr. John McCrae, who was killed
in the World War after writing “In Flanders Field the Poppies Grow.”

All these and many more physicians have made their contributions to literature, they have received their full share of praise and censure at the hands of the critic so aptly characterized by Dean Swift as “The discoverer and collector of writer’s faults” who “travel through this vast world of writings, to pursue and hunt those monstrous faults bred within them.”

In closing I join with Dr. John Brown of Edinburgh “to give my vote for going back to the old manly intellectual and literary culture of the days of Sydenham, Arbuthnot, and Gregory when a physician fed, enlarged, and quickened his entire nature; when he lived in the world of letters as a freeholder, and reverenced the ancients, while, at the same time, he pushed on among his fellows, and lived in the present, believing that his profession and his patients need not suffer, though his horae subsecivae were devoted occasionally to miscellaneous thinking and reading, and to a course of what is elsewhere called ‘fine confused feeding,’ or though, as his Gaelic historian says of Rob Roy at his bye hours, ‘he be a man of incoherent transations.’”