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Thomas Linacre

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centuries. The relationship of the Church and surgery is a striking example of that. As a matter of fact some of the authors of the textbooks of surgery that have proved so startling for the modern time were in very intimate relationships with the popes or with other ecclesiastics. Theodoric was actually a bishop and he did not practice surgery but compiled information with regard to it. Guy de Chauliac, the great father of French surgery, was the canon of a cathedral and therefore may have been a priest, but that is not certain, and was papal physician to several of the Avignon popes. The surgery of the Middle Ages was worthy of the great literature, architecture, art, arts and crafts and philosophy of this wonderful time. That is not surprising, for whenever a generation does any one thing well as a rule it does everything that it turns its attention to, well. We shall see in the next article how well the medieval people developed that most important part of medicine, diagnosis in clinical medicine.

THOMAS LINACRE

By ANTHONY BASSLER, M.D., New York City

HANGING in Kensington Palace is a portrait of Thomas Linaere painted by Holbein, a line cut from which is found on the front cover of this journal. Linaere was successfully physician to Henry the Seventh, Henry the Eighth, Edward the Sixth and to Princess Mary. Not only England, but the intellectual world owes a debt to his activities because he undoubtedly was the most learned physician of his time. He studied eloquence at Bologne under Politian, one of the most elegant Latinists in Europe, and while he was in Rome he devoted himself to medicine and the study of the natural philosophy under Hermolaus Barbarus. Linaere was the first Englishman who read Aristotle and Galen in the original Greek. On his return to England after taking the degree of Doctor of Medicine at the University of Padua he graduated an M.D. at Oxford and he lectured in physic and taught the Greek language at that university. His reputation became so high that King Henry the Seventh called him to Court and intrusted him with the care of the health and education of his son, Prince Arthur. He also instructed Princess Catherine in the Italian language at this time, and published a work on mathematics. Subsequently he produced a treatise on grammar which has universally been acknowledged to be a work of great erudition. Linaere lectured in physic at both Oxford and Cambridge, was the instigator and founder of the Royal College of Physicians, holding the office of President

during the last seven years of his life. The meetings after the establishment of the College were held in the house of Linacre. He was born at Canterbury in the year of 1460 and was the descendant of an ancient family, the Linacres of Linacre Hall. The honors paid to his extended learning probably induced him to abandon physic and turn his attention to divinity to which in the later part of his life he applied himself with great diligence. He finally entered the priesthood and obtained the rectory of Mersham on October 23, 1509, later the Cathedral of Wells and in 1518 another in York. He continued in the Church until his decease which took place on the 20th or 21st of October, 1524. He was honored with entombment in the Cathedral of St. Paul, where in 1557 a handsome monument was erected to his memory. Fuller says of him: "It is questionable whether he was a better Latinist or Grecian, a better grammarian or physician, a better scholar or man, but he was undoubtedly the most accomplished scholar of the age." In this he was reckoned by the best of judges as a man of bright genius and clear understanding as well as unusual knowledge in different types of learning. He was the first teacher of the Greek tongue at Oxford. His enlightened mind viewed with distress the practice of medicine in his day. By no legal restraint was its exercise restricted to competent practitioners. The words of the Charter of the College ran thus: "Before this period, a great multitude of ignorant persons, of whom the greater part had no insight into physic, nor in any other kind of learning; some could not even read the letters on the book, so far forth, that common artificers, as smiths, weavers, and women, boldly and accustomably took upon them great cures to the high displeasure of God, great infamy to the faculty, and the grievous hurt, damage and destruction of many of the King's liege people." Previously to the establishment of the College of Physicians, the power of the authority to practice was vested in the Bishop of London, or the Dean of St. Paul's, for the London district, and by the respective bishops of the other dioceses. Linacre corrected this by the establishment of the College of Physicians. With the assistance of Cardinal Woolsey, he procured from Henry the Eighth and the Parliament the authority, but he had to use his own money for the establishment of the college. His was the first effort to control medicine to those who were qualified to practice it. Linacre published a number of works, mathematical, philological and medical. Thomas Linacre is down in history as the most learned, erudite and perfect type of Catholic physician of all times, a credit to scholarship, a credit to medicine and a credit to the Church and a credit to its priesthood.