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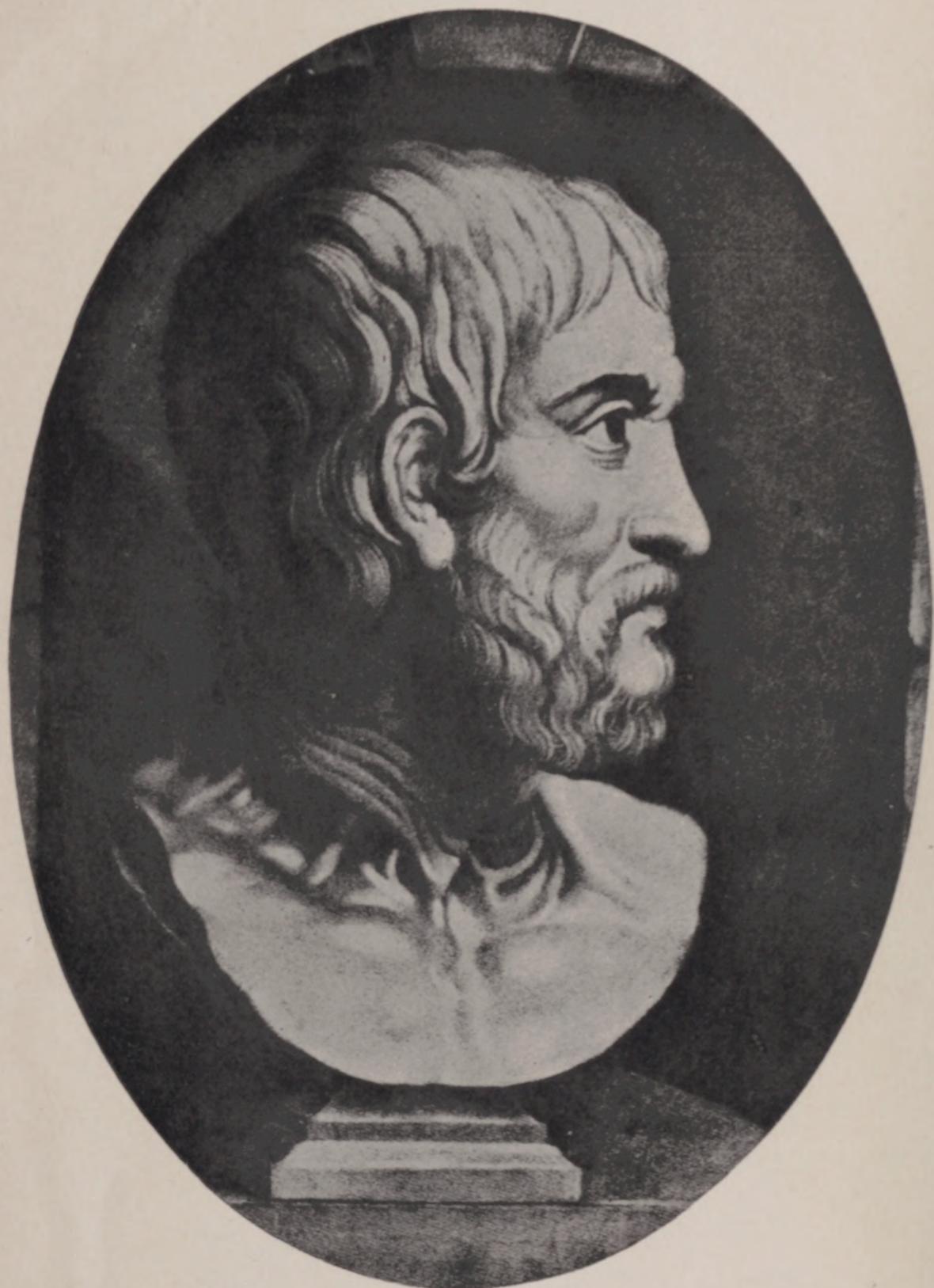
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A STUDY
OF
Ancient and Modern
Secret Medical
Fraternities

ROLAND G. CURTIN, M. D.



PYTHAGORAS

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A STUDY OF ANCIENT AND MODERN SECRET MEDICAL FRATERNITIES.

ROLAND G. CURTIN, M. D.

History informs us that the study of the ancient history of medicine and surgery commences with the Deluge, when the first recorded surgical operation was performed, that of the rite of circumcision. As time wore on, the records became more frequent, explicit, and authoritative. With the beginning of Medicine the secrecy enjoined upon those practising the healing art was such as to prevent a free dissemination of information to the public, and the absence of later facilities also prevented its being spread among the masses. At first there was a coalescence of the functions of priest and physician: so that among the ancients, religion played an important part in the rise of medicine, astronomy, chemistry, and other sciences.

The priests were the sole possessors of all knowledge, medicinal lore among the rest. Through fraternal rules, they concealed among themselves all information by throwing a cloud of superstition and mystery over their practices. In the Old Testament we are informed that one of the chief employments of the priests, except to attending sacrifices and the services of the temple, was to distinguish the several sorts of leprosy, and uncleanness, which they controlled in several ways. First came cures by imagination, invocation, exorcism, astrology, amulets, charms, and talismans, and later, cures with remedies, drugs, surgery, external applications, etc., and later, cures with remedies.

Almost every one is inclined to the belief that secret medical fraternities are of very recent origin; but I think that when one studies the subject they will acknowledge that such is not the case. I, too, was of the opinion that secret medical societies were a new fad until I began to study the subject carefully. I give you the result of my researches,

which carry these organizations far back into the most ancient civilized times, far beyond the Christian Era. They seem to be as old as medicine itself, dating back to the earliest ages. The modern "Greek-letter medical fraternities" are only a few years old, being an outgrowth of the educational movements in the medical schools at the present time. They are based upon the general plan of the old Greek-letter societies of the ordinary collegians. They all are essentially ~~a~~ American institutions.

Medical fraternities have truly an ancestral right to claim a Grecian origin; as in that country medicine was developed as a separate cult, and largely through medical fraternities. As before stated, the beginning of medicine was associated with witchcraft, mystery, and sorcery. The knowledge that the practitioner of medicine in ancient times ~~had~~ was held by a small body of men, who were oath-bound to keep their knowledge among their brethren and apprenticed novitiates. The initiate was obliged to take a solemn vow not to reveal to an outsider anything taught him by his masters, thereby making the body a secret medical fraternity.

We can truly say that secret fraternal medical organizations have been in existence since the earliest times. These men were priests in the dual role of ministers of religion and ministers of science, the latter including medicine, chemistry, astronomy, and all allied branches, as well as the worship of the Deity and the moral elevation of the people. These scientific men were banded together for the purpose of keeping information secret, and for affording assistance and protection to one another. These orders might be said to be the earlier secret medical fraternities; for we can safely say that up to that time of Pythagoras all secret organizations that included priestcraft, mysticism, science, and brotherhood were, to some extent, oathbound medical organizations.

These fraternal societies of a secret character have been

a part of the history of the world, and their study is a part of ancient medical history; as alchemy led up to chemistry, and morality was a hygienic study. Organized bodies have aided civilization, and in early times their advent was coincident with the nation's progress. The arts and sciences represent morality and general education, and have all been improved; and their triumphs have been extolled by orators, poets, historians and statesmen. We can say that history shows that medicine has always kept pace with civilization and refinement; and we find that when one was at a standstill, so were the others.

The Hindoos, so far as history indicates, seem to have been the first people to be advanced in medicine; and from them the Arabs disseminated it to other countries.

The Assyrians were very learned, and the Egyptians received from them much information that was never properly accredited to them.

Moses was initiated into the "mysteries" and secrets of this priestly order in Egypt. In his writings, about three thousand years before Christ, we find many allusions to medicine as practiced by the Jews, the priests being the practitioners. They were very particular as to cleanliness, as a preventive of contagious diseases, and directed the first use of earth for the disinfection of excrement. Their rules were simple and hygienic in character, interspersed with and assisted by ceremonies. The Biblical chronology assures us that the Egyptian emigrants carried the arts to Greece, two or three centuries before the time of Moses.

The early medical institutions of Greece were copied from those in Egypt; and, further, the older Greeks, in search of knowledge of all kinds, theoretical and practical, visited Egypt and Phœnicia as the fountain-heads of all culture and science. These seekers after information were obliged to submit to the initiation ceremonies before they were allowed to pry into the secrets of the Egyptians. These ceremonies consisted largely of magic and incantation. The

scientific medicine of the early wise men of Egypt consisted almost entirely of a knowledge of anatomy; the use of drugs and remedies, applied externally; and hygienic teaching. Pythagoras, the Asclepiads, Hippocrates, and, in fact, all Greek medicine, were indebted to Egypt for the foundation principles.

Solomon reigned from 1015 to 975 B. C. He introduced masonry to the Hebrews through the agency of the Tyrian architects. This fraternity built Solomon's Temple. We are informed that these masons always saluted one another in a courteous manner, calling each other brothers; and that they were kind and charitable to those that were masons.

The ancients were great travelers, especially the craftsmen. They went from country to country, building temples and other structures, or engaging in commerce. Membership in a secret body was very important, giving them an introduction to strangers, and constituting a bond of union that inspired confidence and insured fair treatment.

From the time of Solomon, all the great architectural work of civilized countries was done by these traveling members of the "fraternities," as they were called. They made all the great architectural wonders of the whole civilized world, especially in the Sardinian States and Spain. They built Herculaneum, and Pompeii; the Parthenon; the temples in Paris; and the historic buildings in Rome, Cologne, Milan, Rouen, and Amiens. These were all constructed by the "fraternities," or colleges of priestly architects. This body of brothers were not in any sense medical men, but were an outgrowth of a medical fraternity.

MYSTERIES.—Previously to the advent of the Christian Church the work of all morality and advancement of the civilized nations was carried on by organizations called the "Mysteries," under the veil of mystery and secrecy. The arts and sciences were nurtured by the initiated, as well as the truths of religion, morality, and virtue. The object

was to improve those already members of the sect, uniting them by additional bonds to inculcate religious teachings, such as humanity and morality. They had the Eleusinian Mysteries, Mysteries of Mithra. These bodies were called Indian, Egyptian, Orphic, Cabirian, Phrygian Eleusinian, Dionysian, Pythagorean, and Esculapian Mysteries. Civilization advanced under these organizations. The neophytes were impressed with wholesome truths, viz.: that there is one God, a resurrection, the dignity of the soul, the brevity and vanity of life, and, finally, that retributive justice awaited the unfaithful and the erring.

In the ancient "Mysteries," the opening ceremonies were solemn and impressive. The sacred herald commenced the ceremonies with the solemn formula, "Depart hence, ye profane," to which was added a proclamation forbidding the use of any language that might be deemed of an unfavorable character to the approaching rites.

They then carried the neophyte through gloom and sorrow to light and joy, from ignorance to science, from barbarism to civilization, from weakness to strength; reaching forward toward perfection; putting virtue in place of vice, and truths where errors were enthroned. Their idea was that true repose is after toil and sacrifice. The whole theme was intended to stimulate moral energy and elevate the individual. The ancients claimed that they originated in and were guided by a divinity. Arrien stated that the "Mysteries" were established by the ancients to perfect education, and to reform manners. A study of the subject induces the belief that they fostered science and the arts, and advanced civilization. Hence, we cannot otherwise conclude, that medicine, a collateral branch of science, was advanced under the wing of these secret bodies. Therefore, they were, to some extent, medical fraternities.

The "Orphic Mysteries" was an Egyptian rite. It was an organization before the Trojan War, instituted by

Eumolpui in 1356 B. C., and afterwards united with the Pythagoreans. The Orphic Mysteries became the foundation of Greek civilization, and through their influence, the uncouth tribes of Greece were trained in the habits of civilized life, united in towns, and instructed in useful arts. These rites were the foundation of the "Eleusinian Mysteries."

The Mysteries of Eleusis, are said to have taught the immortality of the soul and the sublime truths of natural religion.

Heckethorn classifies secret societies under the following heads: (1) Religious (Egyptian Eleusinian Mysteries); (2) military; (3) judiciary; (4) scientific (alchemists); (5) civil; and (6) political. As medical fraternalists, we would, I think, come under the scientific, or No. 4.

THE ASCLEPIADS.—Before the Pythagorean fraternity, the Asclepiads flourished, receiving their initial medical knowledge from the Egyptian. The followers of Pythagoras were the first to break away from the field of general science and stand forth as physicians, visiting the sick in their houses. The followers of Aesculapius posed as priests; but the religious part of their labors seemed to be for the purpose of influencing the minds of their patients, so that they could better control them by the power of superstition. They were eminently physicians. Aesculapius was the "God of Medicine," and they were his followers; and were supposed to be his descendants, always calling him "father." That they formed a secret medical fraternity is proved by their oath. In this they swore by Apollo the Physician, Aesculapius, Hygiea, Panacea, and all the gods and goddesses, according to their ability and judgment, to keep their oath and their stipulation. They swore to honor and love their medical teacher; to relieve his necessities, if required; to treat his offspring as brothers, and teach them medicine without reward; also to teach his own children, and

no others. *Second*, to follow a prescribed regimen. *Third*, to consider the benefit of the patient. *Fourth*, not to use deadly medicines. *Fifth*, to avoid producing abortions. *Sixth*, to live in purity and holiness. *Seventh*, to abstain from making mischief in houses of patients; and not to seduce females in the family, slave or free. *Eighth*, to keep secrecy regarding family affairs. *Ninth*, to pray that while they continued to keep this oath inviolate, that they might be granted to enjoy life and the product of the art, respected by all men, in all times; but that should they trespass and violate the oath, that the reverse might be their lot. The part of the oath requiring the initiates to be descendants of those already priests was relaxed, so that others not of the old priestly families could be initiated. The Asclepiads considered all cures in these temples were miracles wrought by the gods.

PYTHAGORAS.—In our study of fraternities that fostered early medicine, Pythagoras and his followers come as an important factor, in its early development. The date of the birth of this remarkable man is variously given by different writers as 569 and 580 B. C.; and so with his death (489 and 471 B. C.). A study of his life is of marked historical interest. He was justly celebrated as an astronomer, philosopher, and physician. He was born on the Island of Samos, which is in the Aegean Sea. As a young man, he was an athlete; but, hearing Perecydes lecture on the immortality of the soul, he became interested in the subject, and ever afterward devoted his attention to philosophy. This subject, later on, led him into medicine. Being of an important family and under a tyrant who looked with suspicion on those of that station in life that left home, he fled from home at night to prevent the foiling of his plans. He reached the shores of Lesbos, and traveled many years for educational purposes, learning the customs, manners, traditions, symbols, and mysteries in Asia Minor, Phœnicia,

Chaldea, Egypt and other countries. He first learned from the Brahmin and Magi, and was instructed in the secrets of their worship, laws and doctrines. In Egypt, he gained physiological information and borrowed from the Egyptians the knowledge of the use of medicine, together with their rigid rules for the preservation of health, which were later made a part of the duties of his disciples. Pythagoras was the last celebrated sage to travel in distant lands for knowledge.

On returning to his own country, he found unfavorable conditions existing, which so unsettled him, that he journeyed to the Peloponnesus, where he was royally received. He there assisted in the Olympian games. From the Peloponnesus, he went to Crotona, in Asia Minor, to study still further in medicine.

Up to the time of Pythagoras, medicine, or the healing art, was closely identified with and subservient to the worship of the gods. Pythagoras had been largely educated in Egypt, when medicine was mixed up with the superstition of the time, such as magic, dream-interpretation, assistance from the gods; but he educated his disciples so that when this sect was broken up, some of his followers finally became the first persons to become unadulterated physicians. Some of these became celebrated in history. Alcmaeon was the first anatomist, and wrote of the diseases of the age. Empedocles, another of the Pythagoreans, was not only a successful physician, but also a divine poet, and a legislator. These men were not surgeons, but used internal remedies, ointments and fomentations. It was Pythagoras that introduced reforms that added vigor to the Crotonians. We are informed that his venerable figure, engaging manners and irresistible eloquence gained all hearts; and that his hearers believed him to be a messenger from the gods. It is said that he encouraged them in this belief and used it as a power in his work.

At Crotona, Pythagoras surrounded himself with disciples, who flocked to him, after having sold all their belongings, the proceeds of which they placed in the common fund for the use of the sect. This seems to have been the first oath-bound fraternity having for its object the sole study of science and medicine, these subjects having formerly been associated with religion, and the priesthood. It is said that this sect put the priests in the shade as regards poetry and knowledge. Pythagoras required his followers, now called Pythagoreans, to go through a severe initiation lasting five or six years. In the preliminary trial, they were required to abstain from conversation. If we had such a preliminary training for physicians to-day, probably we should be saved much mortification. (See the testimony from the courts). The heads of the Pythagoreans taught that body to be silent, in order that they might keep the valuable secrets that had been imparted to them from the outside world. Secrecy was regarded by them as the most sublime, as well as the rarest virtue. Aristotle was asked what was the most difficult thing in life, and he answered: "To be secret and silent." St. Ambrose, in his Offices, placed the gift of silence as the foundation of virtue.

They partook in common of a frugal diet; helped the "Master"; executed orders; and led a pure, simple, temperate life. They wore a simple costume and they used a symbolic language among themselves, and were silent in public. They were so secret that Pythagoras transmitted the doctrines of his sect in hieroglyphic writing only.

After his preparation, the novitiate was initiated into the mysteries of the order. Pythagoras expected his disciples to watch over their own health and that of others, and to attend to the adoration of the gods.

Historians tell us that their symbolic language was the same as the sacred dialect of the Egyptians. His people lived in a brotherly manner, obeying orders as a unit. They al-

ways kept busy, each with his prescribed duty. They devoted themselves to the preservation of harmony between soul and body, and lived in a common habitation, and dressed uniformly. They were cleanly, bathing often. They kept the hair short and shaved frequently. Regular exercise was taken, and sobriety was imposed. Their food was simple, and no over-indulgence was allowed. Pythagoras warned them not to search for homes, as it tended to wear them from the order.

After a time, the populace began to sneer at them, later to oppress them, and then to mob and persecute them. Finally they fled to places of hiding, in order to save their lives. After a time, the Pythagoreans dissolved; and a large number took up the practice of medicine. On account of their visiting the patients at their homes, which they were the first to do, they were called "Periodic," or "ambulant" physicians; in contradistinction to the Asclepiads, who attended patients in the temples only. These physicians, remnants of the Pythagorean school, appear to be the first to limit themselves to the practice of medicine. The little we know about their secrets was revealed by the fragments left after the breaking up of the order, which relieved the members from secrecy. These fragments show that they were not ignorant, but quite scientific, as their later history indicates. The age of tables and papyri, which preceded printing, was not favorable to the general dissemination of information; as only a restricted few had access to them. This fraternity, having been the exponents of medicine and philosophy, makes them of interest to us in this connection. That they were learned is evidenced by the fact that some of their medical theories are still discussed; and, further by the wise sage who taught them science and the healing art. It was he who first demonstrated the forty-seventh proposition of the first book of Euclid. He taught the doctrine of celestial motion. His demise occurred about 487 B. C., and his

house after his death became a sacred temple. He was the real founder of the healing art in Greece, and the surrounding countries. It was Hippocrates that liberated medicine from priestcraft, the grossest superstition, and philosophy. One writer tells us that medicine was only finally severed from theology when physicians were allowed to marry.

Hippocrates was a medical-fraternity man, born 460 B. C, about twenty-nine years after the death of Pythagoras. He died 370 B. C., having reached his ninetieth year. He like Pythagoras and many others studied in Greece, and finished their medical education in Egypt. After which he returned to Greece and began teaching medicine at Cos. He was an Asclepiad, and the most eminent member of this medical aggregation, being entitled by birth to membership, as his father and grandfather had both been Asclepiads. He later devoted considerable time to a study of the votive-tablets at Cos, making use of the medical information thus gained in his writings. He seems to have been the first Asclepiad to break his oath, so far as spreading his medical knowledge to the outside world.

Soranus tells us that Hippocrates was initiated into the Mysteries of Ceres (an oath-bound order of distinction) for having delivered Athens and other Greek cities from a devastating plague.

Paper was rare and expensive in Greece, during his time, so the Greeks learned to use papyrus from the Egyptians. Hippocrates, we are informed, largely used in his writings, tablets covered with a film of wax and the skins of animals. He was called "the divine old man," and "the Father of Physic." He was the first medical man to fight the superstition so prevalent at that time, as well as the trammels of false theories.

Herodotus was the first physician to demand a fee; before this time, physicians were presented with a fee.

THE ESSENES (150 B. C.).—The Essenes, or Thera-

peutæ, were a mysterious sect of the Jews in Judea and Syria, of which little was known to the outside world. They apparently formed a secret organization, and were sometimes called Therapeutists, or healers. They were one of three sects, the others being the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Essenes are not mentioned in the Bible; Josephus tells all we know about them. They were in existence 150 years before Christ and continued after his advent.

The word Essene (plural, Essenes) is from the Greek *esaya* physician, or Chaldean to heal; Hebrew, *asa*. Roset says that the word comes from *essen*, the breast-plate of the Jewish high-priest, a name probably to disarm suspicion. The Therapeutae were men, contemplative, or speculative, the Essenes working but little. They were renowned for their strictness and abstinence (morality and virtue). Josephus tells us that they studied the ancient writers successfully with regard to those things useful to the body and the soul, and that they thus acquired knowledge of remedies for diseases, and learned the virtues of plants, stones, and metals. From this and their names, it would seem that this body of men was engaged in the improvement of medicine. Like other oath-bound mysterious organizations, they had a novitiate of three or more years. They dressed and appeared like monks. De Quincey finds in Essenism a saintly scheme of ethics, a Christianity before Christ and, consequently, without Christ.

Many think that this order of the Essen, or Essenes, grew out of the Cabirian rites. The Cabirian, or Phrygian, rite was mentioned by Herodotus and Strabo, and is supposed to be the original of all "mysteries." Hiram, King of Tyre, was a high-priest in this order; and it is said that through him the initiation was incorporated into Masonry. Their ceremonies were performed in their sacred grottoes at night.

The Essenes seem to have been an outgrowth of this rite which possessed the principles of Zoroaster. They cultivated, it is said, the physical sciences, and especially medicine. This organization was opposed to the Jewish priesthood; hence, the necessity of secrecy. They were distinguished for their silence; for they went about peaceably, noiselessly, without ostentation or any attempt to add to their number. Hence, they were less known than the more numerous sects. They were faithful to their rulers, orderly, truthful, sober, just, and humane; and they were bound by a solemn oath to humility and secrecy. They had to be mature in age, and to go through three years of probation, during which they were obliged to be temperate, chaste, moral, and virtuous, and led a severely self-mortified life. This sect is of interest to us in our study of medical fraternities.

The Druidic and Odinic Mysteries were quite similar; the latter were named after Odin, the Supreme God of the Scandinavians, (Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Iceland.). The rite was of oriental origin, and druidical in character.

THE DRUIDS. History tells us that the druidical fraternity of Great Britain probably had its origin from the Pythagoreans or the Patriarchs or Brahmins. It is generally thought that they came from India. Like the Egyptian, Cabiric, Scandinavian, Eleusinian, and Primal American, they were fire-worshippers. They also worshipped the forests particularly the oak tree. The name "Druid" is derived from the Celtic word *deru*, which meant the oak. The Druids were learned Celts, organized into a mystic society. They seem to have come from France to Wales, and then to England and Ireland, at a period unknown to historians. They communed with the gods, claimed magical arts, cured diseases and wounds, and arrogated to themselves other supernatural powers. They had great reverence for the mistletoe, a parasitic plant usually found on the

oak, using it for their great curative agent, and they considered it a panacea. At a certain period of the year, the Arch-Druid, ascended the oak, and with a golden knife, cut off the plant. If any other implement was used, the plant was not worthy of reverence, and was not effective as a curative agent.

The Druids claimed the exclusive right to practice medicine. Their wonderful knowledge was apparently largely mythical. The echo of the mountain was the voice of a spirit; the roaring of the tempest was worshipped as a manifestation of the spirit of the hill. The forest was the Druids' temple, and its shade was solemn and sacred; and they were forbidden to cut down the trees. They adored the Supreme Being in silence and with veneration. The ceremony of their initiation was as follows:

The initiate was first embraced by the old Druids. This seemed to be proper, as only males were admitted to the body. The initiate was then invested with a coat that reached nearly to his heels. This garment was the distinction of the rank of priesthood.

This interesting body was all-powerful, not only with the people, but also among the national rulers. They presided over the councils that decided for war or peace, settled property-claims, appointed officers for the public at large, and fulfilled many other important functions. Their doctrines were, (1) to adore the gods, (2) to do injury to no one, and (3) to be brave.

They were succeeded by the Rosy Cross Brothers, or Rosicrucians, a body of fraters founded in the sixteenth century, with the object of reforming the church, as well as the state and individuals. They advanced all the sciences, especially medicine, and claimed to be Masters of the "Philosophers stone," and to have a secret remedy by which they could cure all diseases. In this body, medicine was associated with religion and astronomy.

The alchemists were a secret organization. Alchemy was the art of changing base metals into gold. The most desired things in this world are comforts and luxuries, attainable by means of gold, and freedom from disease and long life. The key to these two wished for things was sought after by the Alchemists, who hoped to discover the art of making gold and the magic liquor that would secure perpetual youth, the "Elixir of Life", and these efforts gave birth to the so-called science of alchemy. They used symbols and mystical images to conceal their knowledge from the uninitiated. They were not, *per se*, imposters, but earnest searchers after truth; and were brought into disrepute by persons who swindled the public under the guise of being seekers after truth.

CHRISTIANS.—Upon the advent of our Lord, there was much antipathy shown toward His followers; and, for protection, they formed a secret brotherhood. For the conditions were such, the enmity of the people was aroused. Feeling ran high, through ignorance, jealousy, intolerance, and suspicion. They had a secret ritual, used for their religious rites and for guarding themselves from enemies. This secret Christian body was called the *Disciplina Arcana*.

Before the era of Christianity in Greece, all moral and religious teaching was administered by the Mysterious sects; hence, they were antagonistic, and the rulers objected to the Christian holding sway.

The twelve Apostles was a brotherhood having for its object the advancement of the Christian religion. They went about in the Master's service, healing the sick; so that they were, in a sense, secondarily a medical fraternity.

By the foregoing study, we find that almost all of the prominent ancient brotherhoods or sects were in some degree secret medical fraternities, but not wholly so. There have been since the beginning of history oath-bound bodies called brethren that have fostered the sciences, including

medicine; religion, including morality. Their initiations seem to have been somewhat similar in character, and plan only varying with the ideas of the sages or governing body. Masonary of to-day has been traced back to the time of the building of the Pyramids, and King Solomen's Temple, to Pythagoras and the Druids. Whether this is true or not cannot be positively proved, nor can it be denied; but I am sure that the same ideas and forms can be traced all down the preceding centuries, so that if they are not the same body, they are certainly an embodiment of the ideas of the ancient brotherhoods. These have been handed down to us, the same as the sciences, art, morality, and civilization, which we all possess by inheritance. The most of those who, doubtless, are sceptical, on account of their sparse information on the subject, would be convinced upon studying the subject.

The rites of almost all had degrees, and a period of probation or preparatory stage followed by an initiation with signs and symbols by which they recognized one another. The neophyte in the "Mysteries" was instructed in morality and religion, and was subjected to startling impressions, sometimes even of a terrifying character which was intended to excite the fear of the initiate who was about to take the oath binding him to secrecy and allegiance. The teaching was largely religious, moral and scientific, such as passing from darkness and gloom to light and joy—all of which was to instruct him, and at the same time, to develop his character.

FRATERNITY IN PHILADELPHIA (1819). — Coming down to modern times, we are reminded of a medical fraternity in Philadelphia, in 1819-20. At the University of Pennsylvania Chapter Banquet, in 1899, Brother H. C. Wood detailed to us in his post-prandial address the history of a secret medical fraternity that existed in Philadelphia, the facts concerning which were given to him by Professor George B. Wood, M. D.

In 1819-20, some of the most prominent members of the medical profession became embroiled in a bitter fight. They vented their spleen by writing scurrilous letters, published broad-sides, and reviled one another in articles published in the newspapers. Finally a noted professor caned a fellow-practitioner in the public streets. A challenge followed the caning, and a duel was averted only by the prompt arrest of the two parties by an officer of the law.

At this juncture, some of the peaceable, dignified, self-respecting, and thoughtful physicians, tired of the undignified proceedings, resolved to put a stop to the wrangling of these belligerents, feeling that it was detrimental to the good name and influence of the profession at large. A secret medical fraternity was organized, and a plan was formed which soon put a stop to all the trouble. This oath-bound body made the offending physicians feel that the profession was against them, and that they were in the minority and very unpopular. Soon the atmosphere was cleared, and good feeling was restored; and, as the result, the medical profession in Philadelphia since that time probably has been more harmonious than in any large city in the world.

This was the first secret medical fraternity in Philadelphia, and perhaps the first in America. When its object had been attained, it was disbanded.

This small, but respectable body illustrates the value of quiet, earnest, united action, and the great good that can be attained by an efficient body, working intelligently. No one knew of the existence of this organization, outside of the membership. This combined action was absolutely necessary; as the standing of the participants was such that independent action would have, in all probability, only added to the number of the contestants, and increased the bitterness of the belligerent doctors, who would have considered individual action meddlesome. When, however, they found so many determined men expostulating with them and de-

nouncing them, they desisted. We are now enjoying the heritage left by these fraters; for it is probably the influence of such a state of feeling that has made a success of the medical fraternities and other medical organizations in Philadelphia.

MEDICAL SOCIETIES ALLIED TO SECRET FRATERNITIES IN PHILADELPHIA.—For the last forty or fifty years, we have had in Philadelphia, many medical clubs. While not secret, they are social and fraternal. They have been formed for various purposes, but their two main objects have been medical education and sociability.

We have had the Monday, Tuesday, Friday, and J. Aitkin Meigs Medical Clubs; the West Philadelphia Medical Book Club and Library; the Medical Club of Philadelphia, with over eight hundred members. All these organizations meet at stated periods, and have professional intercourse, with dining and social features added. These bodies have brought the doctors of the neighborhood together, making them better acquainted, more ethical, and possessed of more good feeling.

Such clubs are a benefit to the members, as well as to the general public; for questions of public sanitation are often discussed, and any prevailing disease is talked of; and other medical information is disseminated by means of papers, addresses, etc.

These bodies are quite particular in the selection of their members, which insures good work. They certainly bring about harmony, where ill feeling often previously had prevailed.

Let us inquire into the uses and attraction of secret organizations in the past:

1. Practical fraternity, or brotherhood.
2. Mutual protection, as well as assistance at home and abroad.
3. A new home-circle, even when in foreign lands.

4. To keep secret their private methods among the few, educating and teaching novices and initiates only.

5. To have a permanent place for their valuable archives, which were on tablets, papyri, etc.

6. To have a directing head to govern their actions and to punish the wayward, idle and wicked.

They were the mainsprings of progress in the world. Has any great work at any time ever been accomplished without organization?

These medical fraternities, as now fashioned, are not for political purposes; they are not organized to extort money from the public, nor to impose upon the patients, or to build up a medical oligarchy; they are not for the purpose of interfering with the right of anyone to practise, poor or rich, male or female, black or white. In other words, they are not a medical monarchy, to meddle with the rights of others in any way. They are professional schools whereby the general public are benefitted, for when able doctors assemble, they talk of medicine, public sanitation and set their associates to thinking; when doctors talk about disease and its treatment, those who hear them are stimulated to thought and observation which prevent stagnation in their work. Physicians should be always students; in order to be such it is necessary to associate with their equals or superiors. They are improved by a medical atmosphere, and when out of it they cease to be students.

These societies mean "getting together" of those in the same path of study, and rousing friendly rivalry; encouraging honorable ambition to excel; and extending a helping and guiding hand to the younger neophyte, who perhaps has just left his fireside for the first time.

They are intended to gather together a body of selected men, and to teach studiousness, morality and gentility. They were organized by congenial spirits, for social and fraternal purposes, improving the minds and raising the

standard of excellence in the members; to promote harmony and maintain respectability, and by precept and example, to instruct the members, graduates and under-graduates, in ethics and humanity. In other words, to elevate the profession by protecting it from its enemies, from without and within its ranks. It affords a place where reforms in the profession which can be planned, free from the presence of the unethical, immoral and unclean, towards which perhaps the shafts are to be directed.

From the foregoing, I feel that we can say that Moses, Iemhotep, Solomon, Pythagoras, Hippocrates, and the Asclepiads were fellow-fraters of ours, having belonged to secret medical fraternities. One writer of note, in his work on secret societies, has said that in ancient times secret societies were useful and important, but that now they are useless and on the wane; but their presence in all ages, in their various forms and combinations, seems to prove their importance to the profession. Let us investigate the statistics in regard to the principal secret organizations in the United States and Canada in 1906, and we shall find that seventeen of the largest secret organizations outside of the labor-societies, which are the largest in this region, have a membership of nearly seven millions, or about one-twelfth of the whole population of the United States. They certainly are not diminishing.

Modern Greek-letter societies are essentially of American College origin. The collegians needed a closer alliance with their fellow-students, and they formed these societies. The old ones still flourish; new ones are formed. Medical students had their clubs, but no national society, until the courses were prolonged from two years of four months each to three years of seven or eight months each. Almost every large medical school began a fraternity, so that at this time their members are found all over the United States and Canada.

At the end of the nineteenth century, came the Greek medical fraternities of the medical colleges, composed of the medical students. The extension of the courses to four years first made them a need. The influence of the college fraternities did not follow the students into the medical atmosphere. The prolongation of the courses called for friendly fraternal communion among the students, which the two short terms of five months each did not warrant. The students also wished to be associated with the older graduates, and they were added; so that now most of the professors are members of some medical fraternity. The modern irruption of Greek-letter medical fraternities seems appropriate, for Greece was the place where the science of medicine was liberated from superstition and developed into a separate vocation.

Some persons object to secret societies. This might be answered by saying that each family has its secrets, and so have bank-officers and individuals. They do not tell all their private affairs. In fact, we all have secrets; and some of us require to be sworn to secrecy. To show the good work that may be accomplished by a secret organization, I might cite the history of a religious society called the Order of the Grain of Mustard Seed, which was organized by Count Zinzendorf, and a half of a dozen of his students, in 1739. It was the foundation of the Moravians, a denomination which has probably accomplished more missionary work for its numbers, than any other body of Christians. Its work spreads over the whole civilized world. Its motto was engraved in a ring. "No one lives to himself." Can the enemy of fraternalism say that the secret society had the effect of making its members narrow minded and selfish? Nature has its secrets, or mysteries, too, illustrated by the development of the ovum and the seed, and the chemistry of the silent laboratory of the cell. Secrecy has its attractions to human

beings; and some that are weak are ready to obey the demand of a society that keeps them alive to their duty, the oath of the society acting in the same way as the vow of the church. It brings about unity, and unity demands organization; and organization develops strength.

A good initiation should be a moral show, attractive, and, at the same time, instructive, and elevating; a theatrical performance for those that could not pay for a worthy theatrical show. They become wedded to the parts played: First, because they have to take the parts of the play; secondly, because they have been through the "ordeals," and like to observe their effects upon others; thirdly, they are familiar with the play, and know when it is well done,—the amateur actor is watched in his development; fourthly, the evening diversion is attractive after a hard day's work; and fifthly, they receive a cordial welcome from their brethren, who would, perhaps, be less cordial if the meeting were outside the chapter, or lodge room, owing to social and business relations. They must meet on a level. They have the beneficent influence of fraternal good-feeling, which is engendered by close, friendly intercourse.

General medical societies do much good, but fraternities go further; and when men have real or supposed wrongs, the best way is to come together, and have an understanding. In this way, prejudice is often banished, and ethical breaches closed and prevented.

A good medical organization has a stimulating effect upon the scientific activities of the mass as well as upon the individual. The public is also benefitted when a body of competent medical men are looking after the health of the community, combatting the spread of disease by examining into the causes and demanding the aid of the public in passing proper laws for the purpose of protecting the health of the people.





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