

Texts and Documents

SOME UNRECORDED VERSES IN PRAISE OF ROBERT FLUDD AND WILLIAM HARVEY

by

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IN 1624 there appeared from the London press of Augustine Mathewes¹ a slim 4to volume containing a vigorous attack on the medical quacks and impostors of the day. Written by a then ailing Fellow of the London College of Physicians, Dr. Peter Bowne, it is appropriately dedicated to the President, Elects, Seniors and other Fellows of the College. Apart from its wealth of classical allusion, and an occasional happy pun,² Bowne's poem in Latin hexameters is unremarkable. Nevertheless, it has won its author a brief mention in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.³

Details of his life are meagre. Born in 1575, in Bedfordshire, he was a Scholar and later Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. After getting his arts degree he turned to medicine, and obtained his M.D. in 1614. The entries in the College Annals,⁴ kindly searched for me by the Librarian, Mr. L. M. Payne, show that he appeared before the College on four occasions in 1616 to be examined. Two further entries for 10 and 21 April 1620 relate to his admission to the Fellowship. By 3 March 1623–4 he had resigned his Fellowship and left London on account of ill-health. He is assumed to have died some time in 1624.⁵

The purpose of the present note is to draw attention to a hitherto unnoticed second issue of Bowne's work, of added interest to all historians of the College. Until now, the *Pseudo-medicorum Anatomia* has been known in two copies only, those in the British Museum and in the Wellcome Historical Medical Library.⁶ Both copies collate A–C⁴ [C⁴ (blank), absent in the B.M. copy, is present in the Wellcome copy], both have a glaring misprint on the title (the imprint reads LONDINI, / Excudebat AVG: MATHEVM [*sic*]), and both have a 6-line errata list at the foot of sig. A4^v. The ungrammatical imprint is typical of the slovenly composition throughout. It is therefore not surprising that within a short time a second issue, with corrections and important additional verses, appeared from the same press. The only copy known to the writer is held by the National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Maryland. This second issue (see Plate) collates A⁴ (A1 + χ 1) B² C⁴ c¹ a⁴ b² (?). [18] ll. The leaf inserted after A1 (title) contains an additional dedicatory letter to Sir Richard Weston [1577–1635], later 1st Earl of Portland, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer and member of the Privy Council. Weston is thus favoured merely because of his 'known kindness to literary men'. There is no hint of a more personal connection between dedicator and dedicatee. The remaining preliminary leaves, apart from minor resetting, are as in the first issue. However, there is a 2-line errata list on A4^v. There follows the text of the *Pseudo-medicorum Anatomia* (sigs. B1^r–C1^v). This is succeeded (a1^r–b1^v) by additional verses, addressed to Doctor [Thomas] Mondeford, President of the College and to thirty Fellows, each of whom is individually honoured with a few lines, in order of seniority and/or office. The verses would seem to have been penned before the middle of February 1624, for one of the recipients is Mark Ridley, who must have been dead by 14 February, when Bowne's great friend

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Matthew Gwynne was named Elect in his place.⁷ Bowne refers to the first issue in his verses on sig. a1^v to Sir William Paddy, physician-in-ordinary to the King: 'Lately our *Dissection* was published: but against my will. . . . The printer printed it heedlessly, and did not correct any of his mistakes. . . .' And again on sig. a3^v in the verses to [Thomas] Winstone, Censor of the College in 1623–4,⁸ he refers to his book 'now again printed, corrected, yet not without faults' (as indeed, it was not). Sig. b1^v is blank, though b1^r has catchword *Doctori*. On what may be sig. b2 (the leaf is detached and unsigned) there are verses to the author by Matthew Gwynne.

Of Bowne's verses, only those on Robert Fludd on sig. a3^r and William Harvey on a2^v (mis-signed b2) need be mentioned here. Fludd's writings, we are told, are more honoured abroad than at home, for 'no man is a prophet in his own country'.⁹ Bowne concedes they merit praise, but says such mysticism is beyond his grasp. But that, as he hastily adds, is his own fault, not Fludd's.

The verses to Harvey deserve to be quoted in full:

Doctori Harvey

TE dextrè & doctè Anatomen tractare loquuntur:
Vidi, & dexteritas vix imitanda tua est.
Lectio perdocta est, dissectio mira: quid ergò?
nùm tua me audacem dextera docta facit?
Fecit, & optarem, nam sic tua facta merentur,
vt quae *Musa priùs*, post tua dextra secet.

Which may be translated: 'To Doctor Harvey. They say that you dextrously and learnedly treat of anatomy: I have witnessed [it myself], and your dexterity can scarcely be imitated. [Your] exposition is learned, [your] dissecting wonderful: what then? Does your skilled hand embolden me? It has done, and I could wish, for so thy deeds deserve, that thy hand might dissect, what first my Muse hath done.' This must surely refer to Harvey's Lumleian Lectures, begun in April 1616, and is an interesting testimony on the part of an eye-witness to Harvey's efficacy as lecturer and demonstrator.

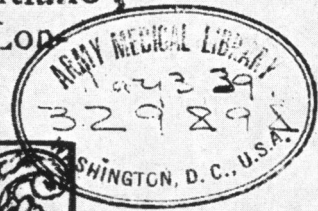
NOTES

1. So spelt in Morrison's printers' index to the STC, which shows him to have been active from 1619 to c. 1640. An illuminating study by G. R. Price, 'Compositors' methods with two quartos reprinted by Augustine Mathewes', *Proc. Bibl. Soc. Amer.*, 1950, 44, 269–74, demonstrates the astonishing ability of Mathewes' compositors to introduce variants even when following *printed copy*. The STC, incidentally, does not list Bowne's work. It will, however, figure in the new edition by Professor W. A. Jackson of Harvard.
2. For example, apropos episcopal licensing:
'Extemplo fiunt medici, doctique putantur / Ex Templo . . .'
3. Article by S. L. Lee, vol. VI (1886), p. 75, which contains one serious slip: the Laurentius Bounaeus mentioned there cannot possibly have been Peter Bowne's son, since Laurentius matriculated at Leyden in 1602 at the age of twenty-seven, and Peter Bowne was *the same age*. Cf. R. W. Innes Smith, *English-speaking Students of Medicine at the University of Leyden*, Edinburgh, p. 25, where his name is spelt Bohun. His career in Virginia is described by Wyndham B. Blanton, *Medicine in Virginia in the Seventeenth Century*, Richmond (Va.), 1930. He figures in the College Annals also: unless the Lawrence Bowne there is yet another person altogether.

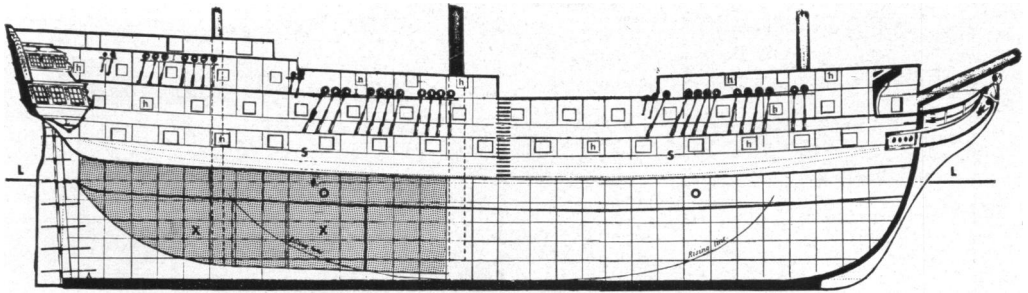
PSEUDO- MEDICORVM ANATOMIA.

In qua maxima improborum et indo-
ctorum turba sub Dio enudatur, quos aut
subdola pietatis pelle velatos, aut insolenti
scientiæ fumo seu fucō obductos, vel irreligio
mera, vel rapax auaritia omnes
ultrâ impudentes ad medicinæ
praxin egit præcipites.

Authore PETRO BOVNEO, olim
Oxonienſi & Somatochriſtiano,
nunc Collegii Medicorum Londinienſium ſocio.

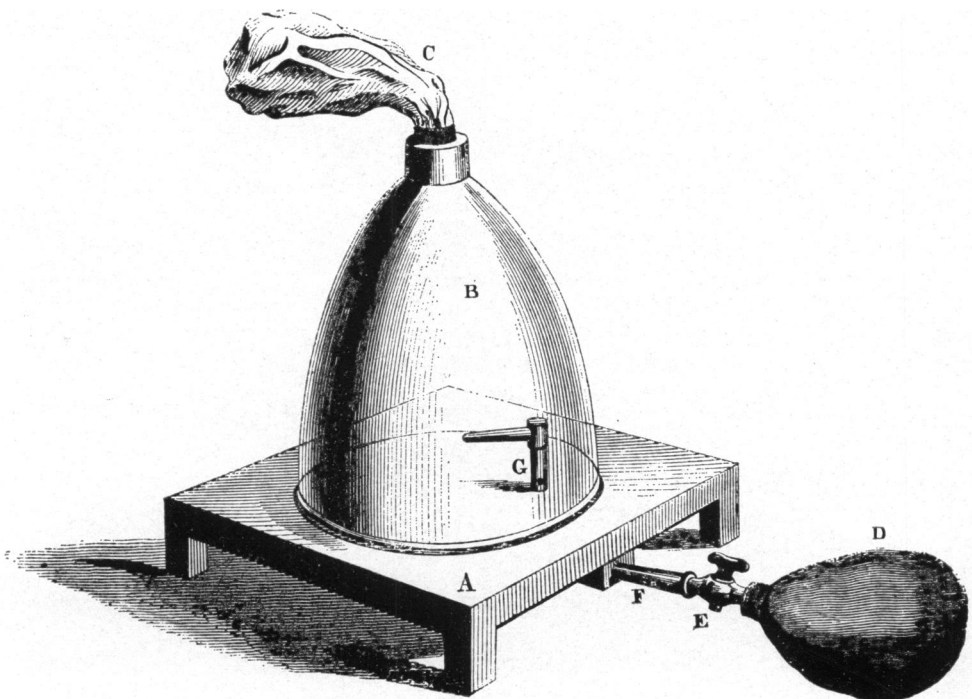


LONDINI,
Excudebat AVG: MATHEVS.
1624.



Cross-section of a seventy-four gun ship adapted from a plate in W. Burney's edition of *Falconer's Marine Dictionary*, London, 1815.

The shaded portion indicates the area in which the mercury was stored, i.e. on the orlop deck (O) and in the after-hold (X) which was partitioned to form bread, powder and spirit rooms. These areas were below the water-line (L). The lower gun deck (S) was partially ventilated by the gun-ports (h).



Brodie's 'gum-bottle' apparatus.

From his *Physiological Researches*, 1851.

(See "Benjamin Brodie: Physiologist", by K. Bryn Thomas, p. 286)

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4. A further reference to Peter Bowne in the Annals shows that his jealous defence of the College's rights extended to more than poetical onslaughts against quacks. 'On 20th March 1617 one Gibbs in Fullers Rents was charged by Dr. Peter Bowne with illicit and ill practice'. L. M. Payne, personal communication, 30 January 1964.
5. S. L. Lee, *loc. cit.*
6. I am grateful to Dr. F. N. L. Poynter for forwarding a xerocopy of the first issue and making some valuable suggestions. A xerocopy of the second issue has been presented in exchange to the Wellcome, together with an *apparatus criticus*. Copies of the latter are available from the writer.
7. William Munk, *Roll of the Royal College of Physicians of London*, vol. 1 (1878), p. 106.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
9. Cf. the article on Fludd in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. XIX (1889), p. 348: 'his writings obtained more attention abroad than at home, though Selden highly valued them and an admiring writer (John Webster) esteems their author "one of the most Christian philosophers that ever writ".'

News, Notes and Queries

A CASE OF MASS POISONING WITH MERCURY VAPOUR ON BOARD H.M.S. *TRIUMPH* AT CADIZ, 1810

It is stated in a private letter from Cadiz, that after the late hurricane, the *Triumph's* boats picked up near 700 boxes of quicksilver, which, for the purpose of being taken care of, were stowed in the store-rooms and the hold; but the heat having caused the boxes to crack, several tons of the subtle fluid ran through the ship; which had such an effect on the crew, that 300 of them were obliged to be shifted into transports, several of whom, it is feared, cannot recover.

THIS report, printed in the *Naval Chronicle*, was the first to be received in England concerning the curious accident that befell the ship's company of H.M.S. *Triumph* in April 1810. The fatalities were not so numerous as the report anticipated but the incident caused considerable suffering and the ship had to be withdrawn from Cadiz at a time when the port was being besieged by the French army.

The *Triumph*, a 74-gun line-of-battle ship, launched at Woolwich in 1764, had performed valiant service during one of the greatest periods in British naval history. She fought at Camperdown in 1797 and under Admiral Calder when he attacked the combined fleets off Finisterre in 1805. In 1771 Captain Suckling brought on board as his servant his nephew, the twelve-year-old Horatio Nelson. Thirty-five years later, in 1806, the ship was commanded by Thomas Masterman Hardy, Nelson's own flag captain at Trafalgar.

Captain Hardy was succeeded by Samuel Hood Linzee and under his command on Christmas Day, 1809 the *Triumph* sailed into Cadiz. There were on board 587 men, 53 short of the normal complement of 640. Ten weeks later, on 6 and 7 March, a violent storm made havoc among the shipping in the harbour. An English transport, three Spanish battleships and several merchantmen were wrecked, some of them on the shores commanded by the enemy batteries. After the storm boats from the *Triumph* went to the aid of the stricken ships. On 8 March they rescued men from a merchantman, the *Henrietta*, on 9 March from the *San Roman*, a Spanish seventy-four,