

ART. II.—*On the Bishop's Licence.* By HENRY BARNES,
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IT does not appear to be generally known that in former times Bishops had the power to grant licenses to practise medicine, surgery, and midwifery. In the paper just submitted by the President there are several entries relating to applications made to Bishop Nicolson for licenses to practise in this diocese. These entries are as follows :—

1706. May 10.—M^r Blacket, an Irish Surgeon, applies for a license.
 1711. July 3.—Licenses to a Surgeon at Burgh & Schoolm^r at W'meloc.
 „ Aug. 16.—M^r Henker licens'd Chyr.
 1713. „ 5.—A. D. Fleming an earnest suitor for a physick-
 license to M^r Rigby, a Dissenting preacher.

Having been asked if I could throw any light on this matter, and show on what authority the Bishop was acting, it occurred to me that it would be of interest to the members to enter rather more fully into the subject, and to trace how it came about that this privilege was first conceded to the Bishops. In a previous paper* I have given some account of the medical profession and the conditions of medical practice during the period in which the Romans occupied this part of Britain, and in so doing I traced the history of medicine very briefly from Greek to Roman times. In the present paper I propose to continue the history, and to show how some of the various licensing authorities were constituted.

* "On Roman Medicine and Roman Medical Practitioners."—These *Transactions*, vol. i., N.S., p. 52.

Pliny tells us that the Druids were at once priests, poets, and physicians; and in the latter capacity they acted partly by prayer and laying on of hands, by divination, by the use of charms, and partly in a more scientific manner. In the numerous human sacrifices, which they would see from time to time, they would doubtless obtain some knowledge of the structure of the human body which would help them in their work among the sick. They were well versed in medical botany, and their veneration for the mistletoe is well known. In the words of Pliny,* "they call it All Heale (for they have an opinion of it that it cureth all maladies whatsoever)." Two other herbs called *selago* and *samolus* were likewise greatly valued by them for their medicinal virtues, and they held the marshwort and vervain in high esteem. They were also good pharmacists, and could extract the juices of herbs and plants by steeping them in cold water; they made tinctures by infusing the juices in wine, and decoctions by boiling the herbs in water. They also administered drugs by fumigation, and were well acquainted with the art of making salves and ointments.

The Danish and Saxon leeches were more ignorant than the Druids. They relied largely upon herbs for the healing of all bodily infirmities, but they drew sometimes from animals. Incantations and amulets were also largely used. In the centuries between 500 and 1000 A.D., the general acceptance of magic influence was so strong, and the fashion set in that direction so general, that every candidate for the confidence of the public must fall in with it. Many charms similar to those referred to in my last paper as being in use in Rome were common among the Saxon leeches. Absurd remedies were not infrequent. In a work† to which my attention was called by the Dean of Carlisle many examples will be found. There is a copy

* *Natural History*, book xvi., cap. 44.

† *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early England*, collected and edited by the Rev. Oswald Cockayne, M.A. London; 1864.

of it in the Dean and Chapter Library, Carlisle. The author states that "some to secure health would fast in honour of the moon;" some for a baby's recovery "would creep through a hole in the ground, and stop it up behind them with thorns." For bite of spider, "prepare a hare's sinews, and give them to the man to eat; it is also good, if one swallow them raw;" "also they be good against nausea, if sodden." Some of their remedies show that they were well acquainted with the action of remedies still in common use, although they were somewhat peculiar in their method of using them. For example (*Op. Cit.*, vol. ii., p. 153), "if to a man there betide much wakefulness, rub down a poppy in oil, smear thy forehead therewith, and all thy body, wonderfully soon the wakefulness will be moderated for him." Here there is evidence of their knowledge of the soporific influence of the poppy; and, as the author points out, the change in the pronoun is obviously an error of the text. They also seem to have been well acquainted with the value of fomentations, poultices, and cataplasms. For example, "if a knee be sore, pound henbane and hemlock," both sedative remedies, "foment therewith and lay on." For the man whose head acheth, or if worms rule in the head—probably neuralgia or tic—"it is recommended to take mustard seed and rape seed, mingle them with vinegar, and knead it with the vinegar, that it may be as thick as dough. Smear the forehead therewith. This is a special leechcraft." It would be easy to multiply instances of striking remedies in common use, but these must suffice.

It is obvious that the Saxons in getting possession of their new territories did not find this country in the condition described by Julius Cæsar, but cultivated and improved by all that the Romans knew of agriculture and gardening. In the gardens there were many plants possessing medicinal virtues—such as mustard, fennel, celandine, parsley, coriander, savine, cummin, rosemary, and others; and many foreign drugs were in common.

use—such as brimstone, quicksilver, myrrh, ginger, cinnamon, pepper, aloes, scammony, and petroleum. They had doubtless learned something of southern arts before they came here, but they very soon would find out that they could only enjoy their new acquisitions by fully understanding the methods of ordering and using them to the fullest advantage. They began to study the writings of the Greeks and Romans, and in this way they soon became familiar with the action of remedies of various kinds. In this they were materially assisted by the influence of the priests, who introduced books from Rome. There is evidence that as early as the seventh century there were men in this country who made a study of the science of medicine, and practised it as a profession. The establishment of monasteries in different parts of the country doubtless contributed to advance knowledge, and there was generally in each monastery a member of the community who was consulted as a physician. It is a matter of interest that among the letters of Boniface there is one from a Saxon asking for some books *de medicinalibus*. He says there were plenty of such works in England, but the foreign drawings were unknown to his country and difficult to obtain. In a Saxon treatise* described by Wanley, attributed by some to the time of Alfred, there are numerous prescriptions, and about 150 remedies against various diseases.

In the period just before the accession of William the Conqueror, a stimulus was given to the study of medicine by the medical schools of Salerno, Naples, and Montpellier, which were frequented by students from all parts of Europe. The *Schola Salernitana* appeared very early in an English form, and the original is believed to have been dedicated to the eldest son of William the Conqueror, Duke Robert, who was under treatment at Salerno for a sinus in his right arm, due to a wound received at the

* Quoted from *The Craft of Surgery*, by J. Flint South, 1886, to which I am indebted for much valuable information.

siege of Jerusalem. It is written in verse, and for a long period it formed the text-book of dietetics for Western Europe. As showing its reputation, it may be mentioned that twenty editions of it appeared in Latin within a century after the invention of printing, of which the earliest was published in 1480.

The school of Salernum, from which this work emanated, conferred after examination a license to practise. This was a privilege that was at that time not possessed by any other school. At Naples, as early as the eleventh century, licenses to practise were granted after a five years' training, but the students had to be recommended by the College to the King or his Chancellor as fit persons. At this period the clergy were almost the only persons who taught and practised physic as well as the other sciences, and there are few names celebrated in the annals of medicine at this date except those of ecclesiastics. In the course of time, however, the profession became so lucrative that many monks, having applied themselves to its study, deserted their monasteries and neglected their religious duties. This led to certain restrictions being imposed. Under the Eighth Canon promulgated by the Council of Tours, in A.D. 1163, monks were prohibited from staying out of their monasteries above two months at one time, and were forbidden to teach or practise physic. No restraint was at first laid on the secular clergy, and many Bishops and dignitaries of the Church acted as physicians-in-ordinary to Kings and Princes, and thereby acquired riches and honour. These physicians were priests, who were educated at Salernum, and were learned in the writings of Rhazes, Avicenna, and other Arabian writers, whose works had been translated into Latin by a monk of Mount Casino, near Salernum, named Constantine.

By the end of the twelfth century the scientific method of teaching and studying physic led to a separation of physicians and surgeons into two distinct classes of practitioners. In the account which has come down to us of

the attempts to cure the wound received by Richard the First before the Castle of Chalons in 1199, the two classes are clearly distinguished, and special duties are assigned to each :—

*Interea regem circumstant undique mixtim
 Apponunt medici fomenta, secantque chirurgi
 Vulnus, ut inde trahunt ferrum levioere periclo.*

There were also some who about this period applied themselves more particularly to the study of *materia medica*, and the composition of medicines. They were known as apothecaries. Richard Fitz Nigel, who died as Bishop of London in 1198, is said to have been apothecary to Henry II.

Next to the clergy the Jews possessed the largest share of learning, and Benjamin of Tudela, in his *Itinerary*, written about 1165, mentions many who were physicians, and practised not only among their own tribes, but among the Moors and Christians. After his return from his travels over the greater part of the then known world, this learned Jew commends the school of Salernum as the best seminary of physic among the Western Christians.

The priests were very jealous of the encroachments of the Jewish physicians and lay surgeons, and in order to exclude the former from the honours and emoluments of medical practice, they obtained from Rome a formal excommunication against all who committed themselves to the care of a Jewish physician. The canon law also enacted that no Jew might give physic to any Christian. These measures, however, had but a limited measure of success. Their efforts in restraining lay surgeons appear to have been still less successful. The Popes did not look upon the practice of surgery with favour; and, indeed, considered it derogatory to the dignity of a priest. Many attempts were made to prohibit priests from performing surgical operations, and by an ordinance of Pope Innocent III., passed in 1215, ecclesiastics were debarred from

undertaking any operation involving the shedding of blood, on the plea that the Church *abhorret a sanguine*.

By two subsequent decrees, the first issued by Pope Boniface the Eighth at the close of the thirteenth century and the second by Pope Clement the Fifth about the beginning of the fourteenth century, surgery was formally separated from physic, and priests were absolutely forbidden to practise surgery. The priests, however, attempted to evade these edicts by making use of their servants, whose duties at first included the shaving of the heads of the priests, and thus they became known as barbers. These barbers were taught to make use of bandages and to perform venesection,* and other minor operations in surgery. They were then taught to perform graver operations, working entirely under the direction of the priests, in order to evade the edicts of the Pope. As they became more competent under this instruction they assumed the title of barber surgeons, and in course of time formed themselves into a confraternity or fellowship. The more enlightened and progressive members, by attending lectures and gaining practical experience, began to consider their connection with the barbers as degrading; and, freeing themselves from it, became a College of Surgeons. The records of the City of London show that the surgeons were first recognised as a distinct body in 1368. Many of them had been in the army and had served abroad, where they doubtless learned much of their art; but they could only obtain a license to practise by appearing before the authorities of the city, and producing evidence of their fitness. There is abundant testimony as to many quarrels between the surgeons and barber-surgeons, and great jealousy existed between them. The first charter which the barber-surgeons obtained was in 1462, the first year of the reign of Edward IV.; but this

* The barber's pole with a red and white spiral band on it, and sometimes with a brass bason suspended from its end, still to be seen in many of our smaller towns as "the barber's sign," indicates that these barbers were in former times qualified to practise venesection.

did not enable the Guild to grant licenses to practise, and those wishing for a license had to obtain the sanction of the civic authorities in the same way as the surgeons. About fifty years later a new licensing authority was created by an Act called "an Act for the appointment of physicians and surgeons," and it is the first of its kind of which there is any record. Owing to the quarrels and jealousies of the Guilds and Colleges, the practice of physic was stated to be improperly supervised, and had fallen into the hands of smiths, weavers, and women. By an Act passed in the third year of the reign of Henry VIII. (1511) power was granted to ecclesiastical authorities to issue licenses to practise medicine and surgery. It was under the provisions of this Act that Bishop Nicolson was authorised to grant the licenses referred to in the beginning of this article. Under the provisions of this Act, any person was forbidden "in the city of London, or within seven miles of the same, to take upon to exercise or occupy as a physician or surgeon except he be first examined, approved, and admitted by the Bishop of London or the Dean of St. Pauls for the time being." Each of these dignitaries was required to associate with himself four doctors of physic* before granting a license in medicine; and for surgery other expert persons in that faculty, who were to certify after due examination as to the fitness of the candidate to practise the art. In other parts of the country the Bishop of the diocese or the vicar-general acted as licenser. The Privy Council, although not named in the Act, had the same power of granting licenses.

Midwives were in those days licensed by the same authorities. This was necessary, inasmuch as if there was any danger of the child dying before the priest could be summoned the midwife was bound to baptize

* The first doctor to obtain a degree at the University of Oxford of which there is any record was Thomas Edmunds in 1449, and the University of Cambridge has one of five years later date.—*British Medical Journal*, 1902, p. 1615.

it. It was therefore necessary that the midwife should be licensed, and also endowed with authority to perform the sacred rite of baptism. Before the license was granted an oath containing fifteen items was solemnly administered to her. She was to use "pure and clean water only, and not any rose or damask water or water made of any confection." I have not found any record as yet of licenses granted in this diocese to midwives, but in the Norwich Diocese Book, between 1770 and 1786, there is a record of licenses given to thirty persons "to perform the office, business, and functions of midwife;" to three persons (two of whom were females) to practise as surgeons, and to two others to practise phlebotomy. No license was granted after 1786. From the table of fees in the Consignation Book at Norwich, 1706, it appears that licenses to practise physic, surgery, and midwifery were generally one shilling each; sometimes two shillings. The fees probably varied in different dioceses, as I find that Sterne mentions in *Tristram Shandy*, the first edition of which was published in 1759, that Parson Yorick, upon the installation of a midwife in his parish, cheerfully paid the fees of the ordinary's license himself, amounting in the whole to the sum of 18s. 4d. Having obtained a license the midwife was still subjected to supervision by the ecclesiastical authorities as to the manner in which she discharged her duties. Among the articles to be inquired of within the province of Canterbury in 1576, Archbishop Grindal,* who was a native of Cumberland, mentions the following:—

Article 58. Whether there be any among you that use sorcery or witchcraft, or that be suspected of the same, and whether any use any charms or unlawful prayer, or invocations in Latin, or otherwise, and namely midwives in the time of woman's travail of child; and whether any resort to any such for help or counsel, and what be their names?

* *The Remains of Edmund Grindal, D.D.*, successively Bishop of London and Archbishop of York and Canterbury, published by the Parker Society, 1843, p. 174.

The following is an extract from the oath taken by Eleanor Pead before being licensed by Archbishop Grindal to be a midwife :—

And I will not use any kind of sorcery or incantation in the time of the travail of any woman.

Midwives were also taught in church their duties as regards baptisms. In the Archbishop of York's injunctions to his clergy, curates were enjoined "to instruct midwives openly in the church in the very words and form of baptism, to the intent that they may use them and none other."*

The terms of the license are interesting and worth quoting. The following is a copy of the license granted to a midwife in the diocese of Norwich :—

Philip (George 1761-1783) by Divine permission Bishop of Norwich, to our beloved in Christ, Sarah the wife of Jonathan Tomlinson, of Walsoken in the county of Norfolk, within our diocese and jurisdiction sendeth greeting. Whereas we understand by good testimony and credible certificate that you are able and well qualified to perform the office, business, and functions of a midwife, as also that you are a person of good life and conversation, and a member of the Church of England, we therefore—as much as in us lies and as far as by law we may or can,—do admit, authorise, and empower you to use and exercise the said office &c, of a midwife in and throughout the Diocese of Norwich, with the best diligence you may or can, indifferently to poor and rich, and also to perform and accomplish all things about the same according to your oath thereupon made and given upon the Holy Evangelists, as far as God will give you grace.

The license granted to physicians and surgeons was a much longer document. I have a copy of one granted by the Bishop of London in 1661 to a surgeon. It recites the provisions of the Act of Parliament under which the Bishop exercised this privilege, the object of the Act being for "the avoiding of many grievous accidents daylie appearing to many of his Ma^{ties} louving subjects by the unskilful practicers of the Arte and Science of Chirurgery."

* *Notes and Queries*, January 12th, 1901.

The names of the examiners are duly set forth, and the result of their report, the candidate is sworn before the surrogate and chancellor, and then duly admitted "to use and exercise the said arte and science of Chirurgery soe farre forth as by the lawes of this realme of England we may lawfully admitt him."

The power conferred upon Bishops by this statute of the third year of the reign of Henry VIII. must not be confounded with that passed more than 20 years later—viz., 25 Henry VIII., cap. 21, under which the Archbishop of Canterbury was empowered to grant degrees. This was an Act concerning the exoneration of the King's subjects from exactions and impositions heretofore paid to the See of Rome, and for having licenses and dispensations within this realm without suing further for the same. Medical degrees have frequently been conferred by the Archbishops of Canterbury under this statute, as well as degrees in arts, divinity, and music. But the power of conferring medical degrees was practically abolished by the statute 21, 22 Vict., c. 90, commonly called "The Medical Act of 1858," which enacted that no degree of this kind can be registered as qualifying for practice unless granted before the passing of the Act aforesaid. The Medical Act fully recognised the degrees in medicine and surgery conferred by the various Universities, as well as the licenses and diplomas of the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, and the Society of Apothecaries; but by this date the license of the Bishop of London and the Dean of St. Paul's, as well as those granted by the Bishops in their various dioceses, had long fallen into disuse.
