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THE AIMS AND BOUNDARIES OF PHYSIOLOGY[1]

PHYSIOLOGY, as the passing generation has known it, took shape and established its boundaries in this country just fifty years ago, when, shaking off its long subordination to anatomy, it was brought to a new life of recognition and progress. The seventeenth century had seen England famous for her school of physiologists, leading the rest of the continent in experimental results and in new ideas. Working upon the foundations laid by Harvey, that brilliant group at Oxford—Boyle, Lower, Mayow, Willis—had brought new light to the study of the living body. Nor was their service only recognized by fellow-workers abroad or by those that came after. Their names and fame were on fashionable lips; like that of their predecessor Harvey himself, under Charles I, and of that other Cambridge philosopher Glisson, their immediate contemporary, their work was aided by the direct interest and favor of the sovereign. But, during the eighteenth century and the earlier part of the nineteenth, eclipse fell upon the light that had thus burned so brightly, though isolated gleams shone here and there. James Jurin, under George II, applied the Newtonian principles to calculating the work done by the heart and to other problems of the body, but his efforts to lay true and exact foundations for the study of disease were premature in the absence of experimental data. Stephen Hales, chaplain to the future George III, made the first measurements of blood pressure in his garden at Teddington, and made many far-reaching observations of the first importance; but, as he wrote, there was indeed "abundant room for many heads and hands to be employed in the work,

[1] From the address of the president of the Section of Physiology at the Edinburgh Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.