The battle against heart disease
By the same author

The Battle against Bacteria

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The battle against
heart disease

A physician traces the history of
man's achievements in this field
for the general reader

With a foreword by
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CAMBRIDGE
at the University Press 1971
Foreword

The rapid developments in the understanding of cardiovascular disorders add emphasis and drama to the continuously unfolding story of cardiology. Because of the increase in technology and the volume of publication it is often difficult to appreciate the background to, or the significance of, new developments. As the problems of cardiovascular disorders increase, so knowledge of the elements of heart disease becomes the more important for all readers. Thus it is a pleasure to read Dr Baldry's fascinating book which traces the history of heart disease from the sixth century B.C. to the present time. Dr Baldry writes clearly and concisely and has sifted a mass of historical material to put the essentials into a highly readable form, achieving a nice blend of historical anecdote with scientific detail.

Starting with early concepts of circulatory disease in the days of the Greek Empire, the text moves on through the Renaissance period, to the discovery of the circulation of the blood, early understanding of the structure and function of the heart, and finally to modern studies of hypertension, coronary artery disease and cardiac surgery.

Dr Baldry has a feeling for medical history that emerges clearly from his writing, and the characters who move through his pages have depth and reality. Despite the wealth of material the text is never dull. Both lay and medical readers should enjoy reading this book and profit from the opportunity to view recent advances against the backcloth of past discoveries.

September 1969

J. F. Goodwin M.D., F.R.C.P.
To K.M.Y.
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‘Those who were before us did much, but they did not complete; much of the work yet still remains and much will remain, and the opportunity of adding something will not be denied to anyone born a thousand ages later.’

— SENeca
Preface

In recent years much publicity has been given in the press and on television, to the efforts of the medical profession in their battle against heart disease. The purpose of this book is to give the general reader a better understanding of the subject by showing how our knowledge has gradually evolved.

It is also hoped that it will be of interest to doctors, medical students and nurses, because at a time when medicine is advancing so rapidly that textbooks are quickly out of date and what was taught fifty years ago appears strangely old-fashioned, there is an erroneous tendency to consider that the modern practice of medicine is based almost entirely on recent discoveries. This misapprehension can only be corrected by a study of history, when it becomes apparent that although there has been a rapid expansion of our knowledge in the present era, in conjunction with technological advances in science generally, medical practice is none the less still profoundly influenced by work of fundamental and lasting value contributed by many pioneers throughout the centuries.

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P. E. B.
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