

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68605-2 - Johannes De Mirfeld of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield:

His Life and Works

Sir Percival Horton-Smith Hartley and Harold Richard Aldridge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

JOHANNES DE MIRFELD
of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68605-2 - Johannes De Mirfeld of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield:

His Life and Works

Sir Percival Horton-Smith Hartley and Harold Richard Aldridge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68605-2 - Johannes De Mirfeld of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield:

His Life and Works

Sir Percival Horton-Smith Hartley and Harold Richard Aldridge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

JOHANNES DE MIRFELD
of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield
HIS LIFE AND WORKS

BY

SIR PERCIVAL HORTON-SMITH HARTLEY

C.V.O., M.A., M.D., F.R.C.P.

*Consulting Physician to St Bartholomew's Hospital
and to the Brompton Hospital*

Sometime Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge

AND

HAROLD RICHARD ALDRIDGE

M.A.

*Formerly Scholar of Peterhouse, Cambridge
Assistant Keeper in the Department of Manuscripts
in the British Museum*



CAMBRIDGE

AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1936

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68605-2 - Johannes De Mirfeld of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield:

His Life and Works

Sir Percival Horton-Smith Hartley and Harold Richard Aldridge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107686052

© Cambridge University Press 1936

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1936

First paperback edition 2013

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-68605-2 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in
this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is,
or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68605-2 - Johannes De Mirfeld of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield:

His Life and Works

Sir Percival Horton-Smith Hartley and Harold Richard Aldridge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

*Sancti Prioratum atque Hospitale Bartholomei
Diligentibus ubique Quibuscunque
Nosmet ipsi non minus Diligentes
Gratissime Hunc Librum
Dedicamus*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68605-2 - Johannes De Mirfeld of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield:

His Life and Works

Sir Percival Horton-Smith Hartley and Harold Richard Aldridge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68605-2 - Johannes De Mirfeld of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield:

His Life and Works

Sir Percival Horton-Smith Hartley and Harold Richard Aldridge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

THE work, which we now present, dealing with the first writings of a medical nature known to be associated with any English Hospital, had its origin in the following manner.

The writings of the late Sir Norman Moore had familiarised all connected with St Bartholomew's with the fact that in the latter half of the fourteenth century, in the days of Richard II, there lived and wrote within the Priory of St Bartholomew in Smithfield a certain Johannes de Mirfeld, or, in its English rendering, John Mirfeld (or Mirfield).

Who exactly he was, whether a physician connected with St Bartholomew's, layman or cleric, and if the latter, whether a full Canon of the Augustinian Order, was not clear, for much had been postulated categorically concerning him which has now been proved to be incorrect.

It has also been known since 1869, from the researches of A. J. Horwood, that this John Mirfeld was the author of a book, entitled the *Florarium Bartholomei*. This work is a lengthy theological treatise, the only MSS. thereof, so far as was then known, being in the Libraries of the British Museum and of Gray's Inn. In addition to the purely theological chapters, however, the MS. contains one medical chapter, entitled "De Medicis et eorum Medicinis".

In the Library of the British Museum there is to be found another lengthy MS., a medical work, entitled the *Breviarium Bartholomei*, a copy of which also exists in the Library of Pembroke College, Oxford. Riley had shown in 1877 that this work was also written by a John Mirfeld, a resident in the Monastery of St Bartholomew in Smithfield. The discovery by Sir Norman Moore of an acrostic in the *Breviarium* similar to the one already shown by

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68605-2 - Johannes De Mirfeld of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield:

His Life and Works

Sir Percival Horton-Smith Hartley and Harold Richard Aldridge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

PREFACE

Horwood to exist in the *Florarium*, proved the identity of authorship, and demonstrated that both works should be attributed to the same John Mirfeld.

In his Fitz-Patrick Lectures on *The History of the Study of Medicine in the British Isles* (1908) Sir Norman Moore referred at some length to John Mirfeld and his writings. Nevertheless, but little was known about his life; and his MSS. have never been translated, though his work has been well known since the publication in 1882 of a small section entitled "Sinonoma Bartholomei". This is to be found only in the Oxford MS. of the *Breviarium*, and is in fact a dictionary or glossary of medical terms employed in the *Breviarium* itself. It has been quoted in the *New English Dictionary*, owing to some of its definitions being in English, and has led, as will be shown, to the placing of a disproportionate value upon Mirfeld's writings.

Bearing in mind the interest which his works—dating from the fourteenth century, and being the earliest medical writings associated with St Bartholomew's—naturally possess for all who are connected with that famous Foundation, it seemed desirable that some attempt at translation should be made, and some effort to elucidate further the life-story of the Author, who had been acclaimed as one of the earliest physicians associated with its activities.

A preliminary examination of the MSS. in the British Museum made it clear that, if only from their size and voluminous contents, a full translation would be a task of great magnitude. We have calculated, indeed, that the printing of the Latin text of the *Breviarium* alone would fill a volume of 2400 pages of a size similar to that used in the present publication. In consequence, it was decided to translate certain chapters and extracts only, which would give those interested some idea of the character of the works. From the *Breviarium* the following portions have been finally chosen:

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68605-2 - Johannes De Mirfeld of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield:

His Life and Works

Sir Percival Horton-Smith Hartley and Harold Richard Aldridge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

ix

The Proemium or Introduction.

The chapter on *The Signs of Death* (with the additions contained in the Lambeth Palace MS.), and also that on *Consumption*, the latter subject possessing a special interest for the editors of this work. Short extracts then follow, giving formulae for the making of *Gun Powder*, the prescription for the *Emplastrum Bartholomei* and a note on *Weights and Measures*, this section being concluded by the *Epilogue* to the work.

As regards the *Florarium*, the *Proemium* thereto has been translated, then follows the chapter “*De Medicis et Eorum Medicinis*” and finally the *Epilogue*.

Appendices, giving details of the MSS. used, and abstracts of numerous legal documents referred to in the text, conclude the work.

As regards the preparation of the text, examination of the MSS. showed that they were written in the monastic Latin of the day, with arbitrary punctuation and division into paragraphs, and in the abbreviated script (as exemplified in Plates I–III) current at the end of the fourteenth century. It was at once evident that no text, if it was to be of any value, could be prepared without expert assistance. Very fortunately Mr H. R. Aldridge, late Scholar of Peterhouse, Cambridge, and now Assistant Keeper in the Department of Manuscripts at the British Museum, was interested in the subject, and with his invaluable and untiring help the work has been carried out, the spare time of several years being devoted to this purpose.

With reference to the *Breviarium* the texts of the two known MSS., those in the British Museum and in the Library of Pembroke College, Oxford, have been collated, and a satisfactory text produced. In the case of the *Florarium*, the task proved more difficult. The only manuscript of this work mentioned by Sir Norman Moore, viz. the one in the British Museum, proved very corrupt.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68605-2 - Johannes De Mirfeld of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield:

His Life and Works

Sir Percival Horton-Smith Hartley and Harold Richard Aldridge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x

PREFACE

Mr Aldridge has however succeeded in tracing five other manuscripts, details of which are given in Appendix B, and by their collation—for not one is perfectly reliable—a reasonable text has been obtained. This medieval Latin rendering and its English translation are to be found set forth on opposite pages in the body of the work.

In his writings, portions of which are thus set forth, John Mirfeld shows himself as a kindly man, who, in his chamber in the Priory, wrote his two treatises for the benefit of his fellow-men: the *Florarium*—a flower-garden of divine beauty—to guide them along the strait and narrow path leading to salvation: the *Breviarium* to provide them with a work, from which they could cull with ease the remedies found useful in those early days in the treatment of the many ills referred to.

His writings upon examination now prove to be entirely medieval, entirely scholastic, and to contain no original work, and are thus in a sense disappointing. The description of the various maladies referred to, and the remedies advised, are based only on *Authority*: the well-known classical and medieval writers, as will be seen in the text, being quoted at length, and often verbatim. Mingled with this veneration for Authority are not a few *Charms*, recalling the Anglo-Saxon Leechdoms, and some examples of pure *Magic*. Of more value from the modern point of view are the sensible remarks on the value of exercise in the medical chapter in the *Florarium*, which possess almost a modern ring, though they prove to be direct quotations from Bernardus de Gordonio.

Nevertheless, Mirfeld's writings possess an interest of their own, as showing from works written in the Priory—which was responsible to some extent for the well-ordering of the Hospital—what was the state of medical knowledge in London some five centuries ago, at a time when, we may recall, the Hospital itself was no longer young, but

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68605-2 - Johannes De Mirfeld of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield:

His Life and Works

Sir Percival Horton-Smith Hartley and Harold Richard Aldridge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

xi

had already been carrying out its beneficent work for nearly three hundred years. The chapter on consumption also has a pathetic interest of its own, for if it be true—as is commonly believed—that the great national hero, Edward, the Black Prince, himself died of this disease, then this chapter gives probably some indication of the lines of treatment which were actually followed in his individual case.

As regards the life-history of our Author, but little was previously known about him beyond the fact that he lived and wrote his works within the Priory in Smithfield, towards the end of the fourteenth century. Mr Aldridge has made extensive and laborious researches in all likely places, in order to discover, if possible, further information in regard to him, and has met with a considerable measure of success, the details of which are given in the text. In particular it will be shown that John Mirfeld (or Mirfield) was connected with the great Yorkshire family of that name, that he came to London, resided in the Priory, and afterwards took the Tonsure, and after passing through the various minor orders, was finally ordained Priest in London on the 10th of April 1395. It seems clear that though a Cleric, and residing in the Priory, he never joined the Monastic Order and never became an Augustinian Canon, but remained a simple Capellanus or Chaplain, an unbeneficed Priest. His exact connection with the Hospital of St Bartholomew must remain doubtful, though it may be that he acted as one of the Hospital Chaplains. The idea that he studied at Oxford, and attended the medical lectures of Nicholas Tyngewich (Physician to Edward I) in that University is based, we believe, on a misinterpretation of a passage in the text of the *Breviarium*. He was, however, in any case a man of wide reading and fully conversant, as will be seen, with all the medical writings of his predecessors, upon which a physician in those days was expected to base his knowledge.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68605-2 - Johannes De Mirfeld of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield:

His Life and Works

Sir Percival Horton-Smith Hartley and Harold Richard Aldridge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

He was evidently further a man of considerable business capacity and well trusted by his friends, as the various documents to be quoted, giving some idea of his trusteeships, indicate. As we have already hinted, his kindly thought for others is manifested in his writings.

He died, as we shall show, in 1407; his will, a copy of which we reproduce, being dated the 15th of April, and proved on the 5th of May in that year in the Court of the Archdeacon of London. In it he gives instructions that he is to be buried in the Church of St Botolph, without Aldersgate, and presumably he was there interred.

From what has been said, it will be apparent that the chief labour involved in the preparation of this work must, of necessity, have fallen upon the shoulders of Mr Aldridge. It is he who has searched the records, discovered fresh texts, collated the various manuscripts, and prepared from the medieval script the Latin texts, as finally printed. My easier task has been to initiate the work, to help it forward at every juncture, and to collaborate in the translation of the text, and in the preparation of the various introductions. Should the work prove acceptable to those to whom it is dedicated, those who have an affection for the famous twin foundations of Rahere, the Priory and the Hospital of St Bartholomew, to Mr Aldridge must the chief credit be given.

In conclusion it is our pleasant duty to tender our grateful thanks to those who in so many ways have helped us in our work. To His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury and his Librarians at Lambeth, as also to the President and Court of Governors of Sion College, our thanks are due for permission to remove the MSS. of the *Florarium*, in their possession, to the British Museum, for closer study. To the Librarians of Sion College our thanks are also rendered for their courtesy, during the study of the manuscript in that Institution.

We are grateful also to the Treasurer and Masters of the

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68605-2 - Johannes De Mirfeld of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield:

His Life and Works

Sir Percival Horton-Smith Hartley and Harold Richard Aldridge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

xiii

Bench of the Honourable Society of Gray's Inn, and to Mr Severn, their Librarian, and his Assistants, for their courtesy in permitting us to consult the copy of the *Florarium* in their possession.

To Prof. R. G. Collingwood, M.A., F.B.A., till lately Fellow and Librarian of Pembroke College, Oxford, we are especially indebted for his consideration and kindness in permitting us to study the manuscript of the *Breviarium* belonging to the College, both in his own rooms and in the Bodleian, usually at short notice and sometimes at considerable personal inconvenience to himself. Our thanks are also due to Bodley's Librarian and the Librarian of the University of Cambridge for the facilities which they have afforded us.

To Dr Arnold Chaplin, the learned Harveian Librarian of the Royal College of Physicians, to Dr G. G. Coulton, to Prof. G. E. Gask, F.R.C.S., Mr L. G. H. Horton-Smith, Canon C. W. Foster, D.Litt., the Rev. Hugh P. Jones, the Rev. C. G. Challenger, to Mr Fulton of the Oriental Department and to several colleagues on the Staff of the Department of Manuscripts at the British Museum, and many other learned friends—to whom enquiries have been addressed, and who have always responded with unfailing and helpful regularity—we tender our grateful thanks.

To Sir D'Arcy Power, K.B.E., F.R.C.S., and to Prof. Charles Singer, M.D., we offer a special meed of gratitude for their ready kindness in reading our manuscripts and for much helpful advice, and many valuable suggestions.

Lastly, we should like to thank the officials of the University Press for the care and trouble which they have taken in the printing and production of this work.

PERCIVAL HORTON-SMITH HARTLEY

February, 1936

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68605-2 - Johannes De Mirfeld of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield:

His Life and Works

Sir Percival Horton-Smith Hartley and Harold Richard Aldridge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68605-2 - Johannes De Mirfeld of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield:

His Life and Works

Sir Percival Horton-Smith Hartley and Harold Richard Aldridge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> vii
I. INTRODUCTION	i
I. The Life of Johannes de Mirfeld	3
II. Johannes de Mirfeld as a Medical Writer	25
II. THE <i>BREVIARIUM BARTHOLOMEI</i>	35
I. Introductory Remarks	36
II. <i>Proemium</i> , Latin	46
English Translation	47
III. <i>De Signis Malis</i> , Latin	54
English Translation	55
IV. Chapter: <i>De Ptisi</i> , Latin	74
English Translation	75
Other Extracts	
V. <i>Pulvis pro instrumento bellico</i> (Gunpowder)	
Latin	90
English Translation	91
VI. <i>Emplastrum Bartholomei</i>	
Latin	90
English Translation	91
VII. <i>De Ponderibus et Mensuris</i>	
Latin	92
English Translation	93
VIII. Epilogue, Latin	94
English Translation	95

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68605-2 - Johannes De Mirfeld of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield:

His Life and Works

Sir Percival Horton-Smith Hartley and Harold Richard Aldridge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xvi	CONTENTS	
		<i>page</i>
III.	THE <i>FLORARIUM BARTHOLOMEI</i>	97
	I. Introductory Remarks	98
	II. <i>Proemium</i> , Latin	114
	English Translation	115
	III. Chapter: <i>De Medicis et Eorum Medicinis</i>	
	Latin	122
	English Translation	123
	IV. Epilogue, Latin	160
	English Translation	161
APPENDICES		
	A. Notes on the MSS. used for the text of the <i>Breviarium Bartholomei</i>	167
	B. Notes on the MSS. used for the text of the <i>Florarium Bartholomei</i>	169
	C. Abstracts from Deeds and Documents referred to in the Text	175

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-68605-2 - Johannes De Mirfeld of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield:

His Life and Works

Sir Percival Horton-Smith Hartley and Harold Richard Aldridge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PLATES

- | | | |
|---|---------------------|-----|
| <i>I. Breviarium Bartholomei</i> | <i>to face page</i> | 54 |
| Beginning of Chapter <i>De Signis Malis</i> | | |
| <i>II. Breviarium Bartholomei</i> | | |
| First portion of Chapter <i>De Ptisi</i> | „ | 74 |
| <i>III. Breviarium Bartholomei</i> | | |
| Second and concluding portion of the chapter
<i>De Ptisi</i> | „ | 88 |
| <i>IV. Will of Johannes de Mirfeld</i> | „ | 176 |