

## Historical and Bibliographical Notes.

A SERIES OF SKETCHES OF THE LIVES, TIMES AND WORKS OF THE OLD  
MASTERS OF ANATOMY AND SURGERY.

By GEORGE JACKSON FISHER, M.D.

### VI. GASPARO TAGLIACOZIO.

1546-1599.



AGLIACOZZI, Tagliacotius, or Taliacotius (for such are the several modes of spelling the name as we find it in different books), was born in Bologna in the year 1546, and died, when fifty and three years old, in the same city, November 7, 1599. Every student of surgery is familiar with his name, for no operation bearing a personal denomination can be better known than that of restoring the nose by the "Taliacotian, or Italian method."

Very few particulars relating to the life of this distinguished surgeon have been recorded. He was for many years a celebrated professor of anatomy and surgery in the renowned University of Bologna. His reputation was so

great, and his name so intimately associated with rhinoplasty, of which art he was the restorer and champion, that soon after his death the magistracy of his native city honored his memory with a statue, which was placed in the anatomical theatre of the university; odd as the conceit may appear to us at the present time, Taliacotius is represented holding a nose in his hand! A very fitting emblem of his fame as a surgical noseologist.

From a remark of Galen (*Meth. Med.*, lib. xiv) it would appear that the making of noses was practiced by the priesthood of Egypt, though of their method, which was kept secret, nothing was known. Celsus is the earliest writer who has treated on "the mode of repairing the ears, lips and nose." The ninth chapter of his eighth book (*De Medicina*), written about the middle of the first century, is exclusively devoted to this subject, under the precise title above given in quotation marks. It was not, however, until about the middle of the fifteenth century that autoplasty, or rhinoplasty, took rank among surgical operations. All the medical and surgical writers from Celsus to this date are entirely silent upon this subject. Peter Ranzano, Bishop of Lucern, is the first who made mention of it in his *Annals of the World*. From him we learn that the Brancas, father and son, surgeons of Sicily, who lived in 1442, practiced this art with consummate skill. He states that Branca was "a man of great abilities, who had learned the art of restoring a nose, either by supplying it from the arm of the patient, or by infixing upon the part the nose of a slave."

Vincent Vianeus (or Vijanus, or Bojano, or Boiani), Bernard his nephew, and some of his descendants, were distinguished at Calabria during the sixteenth century in the art of supplying lips and noses. Alexander Benedictus, a Veronese, professor at Padua before 1495, is the first medi-

cal author extant who, since the revival of letters, has mentioned this operation of surgery. He also took the material from the patient's arm. He adds that these artificial noses badly endured a severe winter, and required care lest they be torn off. Vesalius, Fallopius, and Stephen Gourmelen (*Ars Chirurgia*, 1580), all treat more or less on this subject. Ambrose Paré (1561) says "there was a surgeon of Italy of late yeares" who performed this operation, and relates the following "history." "A young brother of the family of St. Thoan, being weary of a silver nose, which being artificially made, he had worn in the place of his nose that was cut off, went to this Chirurgeon into Italy, & by the means of the fore-named practice he recovered a nose of flesh againe, to the great admiration of all those that knew him before. This thing truly is possible to be done, but it is very difficult both to the patient suffering, and also to the Chirurgeon working."

Taliacotius perfected the art to a greater degree, and practiced it more extensively and skilfully than any of his predecessors, and what is still more important, wrote the first and only treatise on the subject, worthy of the title, to be found in the whole literature of surgery for a period of over two centuries. Our author had unbounded confidence in his favorite operation; he went so far as to assert that the grafted nose possessed a more acute sense of smell than a natural one.

It is a remarkable fact in the history of this subject, that after all that had been done and published, as above shown, the art of restoring the nose fell again into oblivion for nearly two hundred years, and, to such a degree, that less than a century ago many surgeons held it to be fabulous or, at least, impracticable.

This is not the place to describe the various methods of rhinoplasty; however, the story would be very incomplete

unless a word should be said concerning the Hindoo or *Indian method*, which consists in furnishing the reparative material from the skin of the patient's forehead. This method eclipses all others in antiquity, as it had been practiced from time immemorial by certain castes in India, especially the Koomas or potters. It appears to have been unknown in Europe previous to the war with Tippoo Saib, in 1793, when the attention of British surgeons was called to it by the skill of the Indian priests in the reparation of the nose by this peculiar process. This method was introduced into Europe by Linn and Carpue of London, who operated themselves in 1813 and 1814; the latter gentleman published his two cases in 1816. It soon became the popular method, and quite took the precedence of the Taliacotian.

I will end this brief historical sketch of the ups and downs of rhinoplasty by a short account of the satire of Butler, in his *Hudibras* (part 1, canto 1, lines 280 to 286), in the following oft-quoted stanza :

" So learn'd Taliacotius from  
The brawny part of porter's bum  
Cut supplemental noses, which,  
Would last as long as parent breech ;  
But when the date of nock was out,  
Off dropp'd the sympathetic snout."

Now it appears that Butler did not know anything about this surgeon's mode of operating, but founded his ridicule on a story which Van Helmont, in his treatise *De Magnetica Vulnerum Naturali et Legitima Curatione*, to show the influence of sympathy, relates of a native of Brussels, who having lost his nose in battle, repaired to Taliacotius to have it restored. The patient dreading the necessary incisions, hired a porter to suffer the nose to be taken from his arm. About thirteen months afterward, as he was walking in Brussels, the nose suddenly became cold, and after a few days dropped off in a state of putrefaction

The cause of this unexpected event turned out to be that the porter died at Bologna at the same instant the nose grew cold. Dr. Fludd relates a similar case in his *Defence of Weapon Salve*.

It is needless to state that these stories are untrue. Notwithstanding that Irvyng, an English writer, testifies to the truth of Van Helmont's anecdote by asserting that he had "heard it from a doctor of physick, a friend of his, who did swear it deeply; that himself was an eye-witness of it."\*

In Italy and also in India the the barbarous practice of cutting off the noses of criminals existed for an indefinite period of time. Sextus Quintus caused it to be practiced upon thieves and rogues. The king of Goorka inflicted the same upon the inhabitants of Kirtipoor, in order, he said, that he might recognize them everywhere, and to be able to apply to them the vile epithet of *Nascatapoor*. This practice has continued in the East down to the present day. After the recent battle between the Turks and Montenegrins, two hundred and sixty Turkish noses were cut off and sent to Prince Daniel, of Cetlinge. Various motives have led to self-mutilation by cutting off the nose. An abbess, with her forty nuns, did the same when the Saracens presented themselves at Marseilles. To these may be added accidents and other causes of destruction of the nose, all of which would seem to be sufficient to suggest the necessity and encourage the skill of surgeons to repair so great a loss.

Caspar, or Gaspard Taliacotius was the chief surgeon of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, to whom he dedicated his famous treatise on the restoration of noses, ears and lips with studied ostentation. The title runs thus: *De Curtorum Chirurgia per insitionem, libri duo. In quibus ea*

\* *Medicina Magnetica*; or the rare and wonderful Art of curing by Sympathy. C. de Iryngio, *Chirurgo Medicine in the Armie*, 1656.

*omnia, quæ ad hujus Chirurgiæ, Narium sillices, Aurium, ac labiorum per insitionem restaurandorum cum Theoricen, tum Practicen pertinere videbantur, clarissima methodo cumulatisimè declarantur. Additis Cutis Traducis instrumentorum omnium, atque deligationum iconibus, and Tabulis.* The twenty-two "Icons" are curious and interesting. "Icon tertia," exhibits on a full folio plate, a gentleman in knee-breeches, low shoes, etc., seated in a heavily-curtained room near an open-arched doorway, through which a view of the country is seen. The whole object of the engraving is to show that he has no nose and to indicate the spot on his left arm from whence the graft is to be taken with which it is to be repaired. So the pictures go on to the end of the series, showing the instruments used, the retentive apparatus, the steps and stages of the operations for restoring the nose, ears and lips. Some of the plates have from two to four figures each. In the first ten chapters of the first book the author brings all his learning to bear upon the subject of autoplasmic operations, in illustration of which he has not only quoted medical writers, but poets, the fathers, and even the Scriptures, so that we have a motley collection of references to Homer, St. Augustine, Euripides, Horace, Tertullian, St. Gregory, Aristotle, Plutarch and the book of Genesis. Over twenty pages of index in double columns, exhibit the care of the author in minute and elaborate detail in the preparation of the work.

It is the delight of the medical bibliomaniac to possess himself with a copy of the first edition of this rare and curious work, which was published in folio, illustrated with twenty-two full-page wood engravings at Venice, 1597, being two years before the author's death. The second edition appeared in the following year in small octavo (it looks like a 12 mo.) at Frankfort, 1598. The third and last edition is in octavo with six plates in lithograph, edited by M. Troschel, Berlin, 1831.