

ALBERT VON HALLER - THE GREATER ANATOMIST

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Albert Von Haller (1708-1777) was pupil of Albinus, who, with a mind imbued with every department of literature and science, directed his chief attention to the cultivation of anatomical and physiological knowledge. Having undertaken at an early age (twenty-one) to illustrate, with commentaries, the physiological prelections of his preceptor H. Boerhaave, he devoted himself assiduously to the perusal of every work which could tend to facilitate his purpose; and, as he found numerous erroneous or imperfect statements, and many deficiencies to supply, he undertook an extensive course of dissection of human and animal bodies to obtain the requisite information.

During the seventeen years Haller was professor at Gottingen, he dissected 400 bodies, and inspected their organs with the utmost care. The result of these assiduous labours appeared at intervals in the form of dissertations by himself, or under the name of some one of his pupils, finally published in a collected shape between 1746 and 1751 "Disputationes Anatomicae Selectiores", and in eight numbers of most accurate and beautiful engravings, representing the most important parts of the human body, e. g. the diaphragm, the uterus, ovaries and vagina, the arteries of the different regions and organs, with learned and critical explanatory observations.

Some years after, when Haller had retired from his academical duties at Gottingen, he published between 1757 and 1765 the large and elaborate work which, with singular modesty, he styled "Elements of Physiology". This work, though professedly devoted to physiology, rendered, nevertheless, the most essentially services to anatomy. Haller, drawing an accurate line of distinction between the two, gave the most clear, precise and complete descriptions of the situation, position, figure, component parts and minute structure of the different organs and their appendages. The anatomical descriptions are not only the most valuable part of his work, but the most valuable that had then or for a long time after appeared.