



IMHOTEP



I. IMHOTEP AS A DEMIGOD

IMHOTEP

The Vizier and Physician of

KING ZOSER

and afterwards

THE EGYPTIAN GOD

OF MEDICINE

BY

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IN HONOUR
OF
IMHOTEP

**'The first Figure of a Physician to stand out clearly
from the Mists of Antiquity.'**—SIR W. OSLER.

THE PROLOGUE

THIS Monograph is consecrated to the memory of a distinguished magician-physician and sage who first appears on the stage of Egyptian history in the reign of King Zoser of the IIIrd Dynasty, and reappears at intervals on that stage during a period of over three thousand years. His record therefore extends over a large part of the history of ancient Egypt.

We shall attempt to trace the fortunes of Imhotep both during the period of his human activity and also during the subsequent periods when he was looked upon first as a demigod and finally as one of the full deities of Egypt. We shall also seek to analyse the forces which resulted in such an exceptional occurrence as the deification of an ordinary mortal, i. e. of one who had never been a king.

The subject is one which will interest various groups of readers. In the first place it will appeal to the lover of archaeology who is fascinated by the early story of our race and by every detail which throws light on its evolution. There is a glamour in the study of the earliest pages of

liberal scale, so that the reader may be furnished with the authority on which statements are founded.

An abstract of this Monograph was contributed to the Fourth International Congress of the History of Medicine which met last year in Geneva. Since, however, the short time allotted to individual contributions forbade the submission of more than a portion of the following study, it has been thought well to publish the work *in extenso*.

My cordial thanks are due to various authorities who have given facilities in connexion with illustrations.

The Director of the Musée des Antiquités Égyptiennes at Cairo has kindly permitted the reproduction of Figs. I and v; the Ministry of Public Works in Egypt the use of Col. Lyons's photographs of Philae. The authorities of the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum have given facilities in regard to Fig. VII; those of the Staats-Museum of Berlin in regard to Fig. VI; those of the British Museum in regard to Figs. X and XI; the *Illustrated London News* in regard to Fig. II; Messrs. Methuen & Co. in regard to Fig. XII; the Egyptological Department of the Liverpool University in regard to Fig. XVII. To

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The story of Imhotep adds a fresh chapter to the History of Medicine which is gradually being compiled, thanks to the collaboration of workers all the world over.

J. B. H.

WESTFIELD,
READING.

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I

INTRODUCTION

IN the childhood of the world Egypt was the pioneer country as regards the evolution of medicine. To her belongs the high honour of having raised the healing art to a level far exceeding that hitherto attained. Both in diagnosis and in therapeutics astonishing progress was made. Even pathology attracted widespread interest; the Edwin Smith Papyrus suggests that dissection of the human body was systematically practised in ancient times.

The medical schools of Egypt, closely associated with her priestcraft and temples, were famous far and wide, her specialist physicians being summoned to attend royal and other personages in distant lands.¹ For a physician to have been educated in Egypt was in itself a passport to success. This high reputation is acknowledged by Homer when he says: 'In Egypt the men are more skilled in medicine than any of human kind.'²

Most of the ancient races of the world have found a place in their theology for one or more deities of medicine to whom were attributed miraculous powers in restoring sick and apparently

¹ Herodotus, ii. 84; iii. 1, 129.

² *Odyssey*, iv. 227.

