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Introducing John Hall, Master of Physicke

The earliest reference to John Hall is his admission to Queens' College, Cambridge, aged 14, in 1589. The last is his will dated 25 November 1635. His *Little Book of Cures, Described in Case Histories and Empirically Proven, Tried and Tested in Certain Places and on Noted People* forms the most substantial account of his life and work among his patients in the locale made famous by Hall's father-in-law, William Shakespeare. Most of the records relating to Hall concern his life in Stratford-upon-Avon, starting with his marriage to Susanna, the Shakespeares' eldest child, in June 1607.

Hall was born in Carlton, Bedfordshire, the son of William Hall. John Taplin has written importantly and extensively on Hall's family background in *Shakespeare's Country Families* (Taplin 2018: 85–112). Taplin's book is not widely known but is available for consultation in the Shakespeare Centre Library. Hall received his BA in 1593/4 and his MA in 1597. A doctorate in medicine was required for licensing by the College of Physicians of London or to teach at a university, but not otherwise. An academic doctorate was no more necessary as a medical qualification then than it is now. Although Hall never obtained, or claimed to have, the degree of Doctor of Medicine, his MA made him better qualified than most physicians in England at this time. Hall never used the title of Dr, nor was he addressed so by his contemporaries, though he has frequently and confusingly been granted it *post mortem*.

1 The signature of John Hall, churchwarden, Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, 20 April 1621. Hall's is the third signature down, just below Thomas Wilson (the vicar). Seventh down is July Shaw (who lived next door but one to New Place and who was one of the witnesses of Shakespeare's will), and ninth down is Bartholomew Hathaway (Anne Shakespeare's brother).

Of the 814 physicians practising outside London between 1603 and 1643, only 78 per cent had formally matriculated at a university (Raach 1962: 250). Of that 78 per cent, 40 per cent held BAs, 34 per cent MAs and 30 per cent were Doctors of Medicine. Hall may, like many English students, have travelled around the Continent and studied for a few weeks or months at one or more universities. If so, the purpose was to gain wider experience rather than a further degree. But short-term, unregistered students who

paid their bills, and stayed out of trouble, commonly left no records behind them.

Outside London, physicians were supposed to be licensed by the local bishop but this was not, in practice, essential, and the records are patchy. A physician often applied for a licence only when a dispute arose with a patient or colleague, for the extra status it gave. There are no records of licences in the Worcester diocese before 1661, so either they have been lost, or none were granted. John was recognised as 'professor of medicine' (that is, practising medicine as a profession) by Stratford's Church Court in 1622 (Brinkworth 1972: 148). This was a 'Peculiar' Court, sharing some responsibilities with the bishop but independent of him in two years out of three, so the recognition is equivalent to an episcopal licence.

Hall would have studied medical textbooks as part of his MA, but in addition 'often a young physician would acquire practical bedside knowledge by working with an established physician' (Wear 2000: 122). We know that Hall had access to medical books. As executor of his father's will he received 'all my books of physic' (Marcham 1931: 25). This may indicate that Hall's father was also a physician, but medical books were commonly owned by householders. In fact it tended to be their wives who provided the first line of medical care for the family and servants. Hall's father, William, bequeathed books of astronomy, astrology and alchemy to his servant Matthew Morrys, but only on condition that Matthew should instruct John in these arts, if he wished to learn them. These kinds of books were far less common in a standard household library, and might be indicative of William Hall's main interests. At some point, Morrys, too, moved to Stratford-upon-Avon and seems to have maintained friendly contact with the Halls; he named two of his children Susanna and John, after them. Two years after Shakespeare's death, in 1618, John made Morrys a trustee, along with John Greene, of the gatehouse in Blackfriars that Susanna had inherited from her father (Schoenbaum 1987: 275).

2 On 14 May 1622, John Hall was recorded as a 'professor of medicine' (i.e. a practitioner of medicine) in the records of the Stratford-upon-Avon Ecclesiastical Court (also known as the Bawdy Court). This is evidence of Hall being licensed in medicine by a court which had authority to license him when the bishop was not present. The record includes 'He did not appear. Pardoned.' Immediately below Hall's name are three 'professors of surgery': Isaac Hitchcox, John Nason (similarly 'pardoned') and Edward Wilkes ('Let him be cited for the next court.'). They would all have had to present their licences before the ecclesiastical authorities in order to continue their practice.

¶ Here begynneth a good Booke of Medecines called the treasure of poore men.

3 Title-page of *The Treasurie of Poor Men* (1560), a popular medical book of the day, written in English, and which emphasises by contrast Hall's own motivation for writing. His text was in Latin and drew freely on other Latin medical texts. Hall wanted to demonstrate that he was a learned physician who was conversant with the best minds of his time.

It is likely that Hall also learned about medicine from his brother-in-law, William Sheppard, who had gained his MA at King's College, Cambridge in 1590, and his doctorate in medicine in 1597. After marrying John's sister, Sara, Sheppard moved to Leicester in 1599. It is likely that Sara had met William in Cambridge through her brother (since no other connection between the families is known), and that Sheppard invited John to accompany him to Leicester as his medical assistant. If so, then Hall would have had time for four or five years of supervised practice, and a visit to the Continent, before setting up on his own.

Settling in Stratford-upon-Avon

The reasons behind Hall's move to Stratford-upon-Avon are unknown. Stratford was prosperous and had no resident physician, but the same applied to other small towns. The only identified link is through Abraham Sturley, estate agent to the Lucy family at nearby Hampton Lucy. The Lucys had estates near Carlton, so there might have been contact between Sturley and the Hall family there (Mitchell 1947: 10). There is no way of knowing whether John had met the Shakespeare family before his move.

John and Susanna Shakespeare married in Holy Trinity Church on 5 June 1607. Elizabeth, who was to be their only child, was christened on 21 February the following year. It is not known for certain where they lived before Susanna inherited New Place on the death of her father. Hall's Croft was alluded to by the renowned Stratford-upon-Avon antiquarian Robert Bell Wheler in 1814. He says that he has seen 'in some old paper relating the town, that Dr Hall resided in that part of Old Town which is in the parish of Old Stratford' (Halliwell-Phillipps 1886: 321).

Dendrochronological evidence, commissioned by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, shows that the oldest part of Hall's Croft, facing on to the road, was built from trees felled in the

4 The house known as Hall's Croft, the only surviving dwelling of the right period in Old Town that could have belonged to John Hall. The front of the building can be dated to around 1613. It is possible that the present house replaced an earlier dwelling on the same site, which might also have been the home of the Halls from the time of their marriage in 1607. This photo was taken in 1951 when the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust bought the house in order to preserve it for the nation.

summer of 1613 (Anon. 1990). If they did live there for a while, it is likely that they rented it rather than owned it, since there is no record of sale, and the house is not mentioned in Hall's will with his other two properties (a house in London and a house in Acton, Middlesex). Hall did own a 'close on Evesham Way', for which he paid a charge to the Stratford Corporation from 1612 to 1616 (Stratford-upon-Avon Corporation Chamberlain's Accounts 1585–1619: 228, 245, 263, 276). It is likely that Hall used the close as a meadow for the horse he needed in order to visit his patients.

John Hall and William Shakespeare

References to contacts between John Hall and his father-in-law are sparse. In 1611 their names appeared (with sixty-nine others) on what is thought to be a subscription list raising money to support a bill in Parliament for repairs to the highways (Bearman 1994: 44). The Halls would eventually inherit the 107 acres of land purchased by Shakespeare in 1602, land which would have been affected by the proposed enclosure at Welcombe in 1614. The clerk of the Stratford Corporation, Thomas Greene (a distant kinsman of Shakespeare), records a meeting in London on 17 November 1614, commonly assumed to have been with both Shakespeare and Hall, though Greene did not unequivocally state this. Greene visited 'my cousin Shakespeare', 'to see him how he did'. In the conversation that followed, 'He [Shakespeare] told me that they assured him they meant to enclose no further than to Gospel Bush

5 An artist's reconstruction of New Place. Hall and his family moved in from 1616 on his wife having inherited on the death of her father, William Shakespeare.

[…] and he and Mr Hall say they think there will be nothing done at all' (Ingleby 1885: iii). Shakespeare was probably reporting Hall's views based on prior discussions in Stratford, to emphasise their agreement on the issue.

In his will of 1616, Shakespeare made Hall joint residuary legatee and executor, along with Susanna (the main executor). Hall proved Shakespeare's will on 22 June 1616 and seems to have discharged his duties satisfactorily (Schoenbaum 1987: 306).

Physicians in Shakespeare's plays

The relationship between Hall and Shakespeare becomes important when considering whether Hall influenced Shakespeare's portrayal of physicians in his plays, a debate that started in 1860 and has continued ever since (Bucknill 1860: 36). The occasionally disputed consensus is, first, that medical matters occur more frequently and are dealt with more seriously in the later plays, and, secondly, that Hall's influence explains this. Two considerations rarely mentioned in this respect are that Shakespeare's subjects and style changed over time, and that his characters are on stage for dramatic purposes, wider issues (such as the accuracy of medical references) being subordinated to the immediate pressures of plot and situation.

One does not need to invoke Hall's influence to see that a physician like Dr Caius (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*, 1597–98) would be inappropriate in the later tragedies. Dr Pinch (*The Comedy of Errors*, 1594) is a schoolmaster, therefore a cleric not a physician. The scenes with a doctor in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613–14) are by John Fletcher, not Shakespeare. Helen's circumstances in *All's Well That Ends Well* (1604–05) were uncommon but not unknown. Wives or daughters did sometimes inherit a practice and, with conditions, continue to practise physic (Pelling and Webster 1979: 183). In the medical marketplace of London or Norwich, about a quarter of unlicensed practitioners (excluding nurses and midwives), or

one-eighth of all, were women. The dialogue between the Doctor and Cordelia in *King Lear* (1605–06) serves to slow down the action and build up tension before Lear's wakening. The advice given to Cordelia as her father regains consciousness is general enough to be given by a Doctor in the 1608 quarto, but by a Gentleman in the First Folio. The Scottish Doctor in *Macbeth* (1606) has been criticised for political and medical fearfulness and for avoiding any positive medical action in the sleepwalking scene. That, however, is not his dramatic function. He provides half a dialogue without which the sleepwalking scene would be a dumb show. A brisk statement that he would be back in the morning with a purge, a cupping glass and a remedy for melancholy might sound better professionally, but hardly fits the plot.

Pericles has attracted most attention, having been written around the time of John and Susanna's wedding. In a play in which the astonishing and the everyday are juxtaposed, Cerimon the physician is remarkably down to earth. He enters with the most practical medical exchanges that Shakespeare wrote. He says to a servant, 'Your master will be dead ere you return./ There's nothing can be ministered to nature/ That can recover him'; and to a poor man, 'Give this to th' pothecary/ And tell me how it works' (*Pericles* scene 12.7–10). Cerimon here performs the two key functions of a physician: to pronounce a prognosis, and if possible, prescribe treatment.

Cerimon's speech about his practice has been read as a description of an ideal physician, and perhaps as praise of Shakespeare's new son-in-law:

> I ever
> Have studied physic, through which secret art,
> By turning o'er authorities, I have,
> Together with my practice, made familiar
> To me and to my aid the blest infusions
> That dwells in vegetives, in metals, stones; (*Pericles* scene 12.28–33)

The 'secret art' should not be heard too literally. Supposedly secret remedies are a commonplace in the medical literature of the time. Hall quoted the *Thresor des remedes secrets pour les maladies des femmes* in his *Little Book* (Liébault 1585). The reference to metals and stones has been taken as indicating the influence of the highly influential early-modern Swiss physician, Paracelsus (the inference being that Shakespeare would have known more about medical treatments through his son-in-law), but the parallel with Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet* (1594–95), 'O mickle is the powerful grace that lies/ In plants, herbs, stones, and their true qualities' (*Romeo and Juliet* 2.2.15–16), shows that Shakespeare's use of this kind of language cannot be attributed to his relationship with Hall.

Whereas it might be pleasant to think of the depiction of Cerimon as Shakespeare's wedding tribute to Hall, Cerimon's referring to 'authorities' and 'practice' may be more significant. He claims to have both a traditional book-based university education, and practical proof from his own experience that his treatments work. Hall based the title of his manuscript, *A Little Book of Cures, Described in Case Histories and Empirically Proven, Tried and Tested in Specified Places and on Identified People*, on that of his favourite author, Martin Ruland the Elder (1569–1611). The pairing of 'practice' with 'authorities' was still relatively new and Ruland felt the need to explain it: 'I call those cures empiric, not because they are based on experience only as the empiric sect declares, but those which combine simultaneously rational teaching with practice, and are managed by method' (Ruland 1628: Sig.a3v). This is the most likely, perhaps only, point at which we see can Hall's influence on Shakespeare's writing.

John Hall in Stratford-upon-Avon's civic and religious life

Between 1616 and his death, Hall is mentioned in various records relating to civic life. He was elected to the Corporation in 1617

and 1623, but was excused from taking up the position on both occasions. In 1625 he sold most of his share of the tithes to the Corporation (Eccles 1963: 105). The following year he was fined £10 for not having turned up to Charles I's coronation (which gentlemen in ownership of lands valued above £40 were required to do, in order to be created knights – one of the new king's ways of raising extra money). In 1628 he was elected churchwarden, and in 1629 presented a new pulpit to the church (Lane 1996: xxv); the pulpit was eventually replaced. In the same year, trouble over his brother Dive's will meant that Hall agreed that he had given up executorship of their father's will because it would be 'a hindrance … in his practice being a physician' (Eccles 1963: 112).

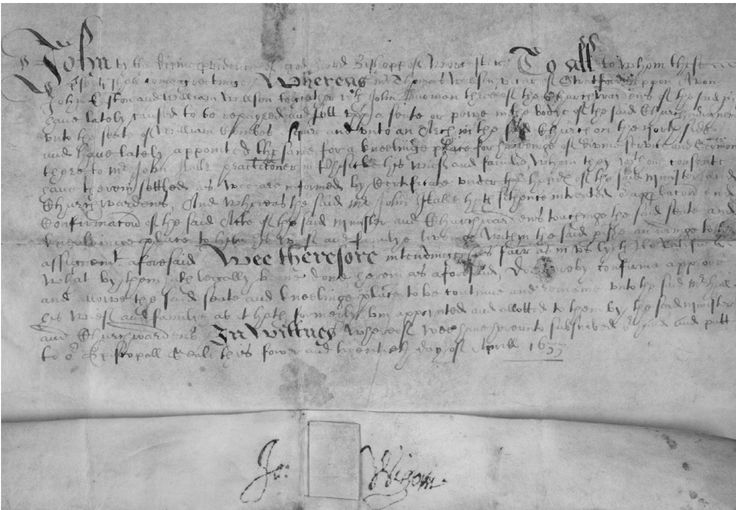
Hall is usually described as a Puritan, a contested word that meant something very different in the early seventeenth century to the circumstances of the post-war Commonwealth period. Hall would more likely have described himself as one of the 'Godly', an evangelical strand of the Church of England tending to Calvinism, emphasising preaching of the word, and consciously aiming to improve society as well as personal morality. Detractors used 'Puritan' to label behaviour that they saw as hypocritical, self-serving and prurient prying into other people's affairs (Marshall 2012: 146). Alternatively, 'Puritanism did not involve particular, exclusive positions, but rather the holding of conventional Protestant positions in an especially zealous and committed form' (Hughes 1994: 62). Hall was certainly committed to the Episcopal Church of England, and showed no sympathy for Presbyterianism or non-conformism. If Susanna's absence from Easter Communion in 1606 was due to Puritan rather than Catholic leanings, she may have been the more radical of the two (Greer 2007: 239).

From around 1625 onwards, Hall was increasingly caught in a conflict between the Corporation and the vicar of Holy Trinity (Hughes 1994: 69–74). If his behaviour was difficult, even intemperate, he was not alone. He and other leading citizens faced a set of insoluble problems within a confusion of overlapping

responsibilities and jurisdictions. The Corporation was responsible for the vicar's and schoolmaster's salaries, but the Lord of the Manor held the presentation to the living. The Puritan-dominated Corporation took advantage of confusion over the Lordship in 1619 to appoint a new, learned vicar. Opponents of Thomas Wilson's appointment (including John Lane, who had accused Susanna of adultery in 1613) disrupted his installation by rioting around and in Holy Trinity, and publishing libels which led to a Star Chamber suit.

At first the Corporation supported the vicar, increasing his stipend from £20 to £60 (a very considerable sum) in recognition of his preaching. They supported each other against the Bishop of Worcester's complaint that Wilson was taking more powers to the Church Court than he should. Relationships must have started to sour before 1629, when Wilson's stipend was cut and another preacher appointed following a dispute about the profits of the churchyard. Hall sided with Wilson, claiming that his sale of the tithes in 1625 had been intended to enhance the stipends of the vicar and schoolmaster. He finally agreed to election on to the Corporation in July 1632, but in October 1633 was displaced for breach of orders and non-attendance. The same year he was briefly and irregularly reappointed churchwarden, and was associated with Wilson's Chancery suit against the Corporation for restoration of his stipend. Hall's relationships with the Corporation soured to the point that in 1634 the members met to discuss and deny Hall's charge that they were 'foresworn villains' (Hughes 1994: 68).

The animosities spilled over into an unseemly personal row about the allocation of pews in Holy Trinity, which had to be resolved by Bishop Thornborough of Worcester. Wilson had granted Hall and his family a pew which it was claimed had always been used by the burgesses' wives. Hall had the advantage of having successfully treated Thornborough in February 1633. The bishop supported Hall's case, writing the letter to 'Mr John Hall



6 The Bishop of Worcester's grant to John Hall for a family pew, February 1633, in which he is very clear about referring to Hall by his profession: 'that Mr. Thomas Willson, Vicar of Stratford-upon-Avon together with John Easton, William Willson, and John Burman the three Churchwardens of the Parish Church of Stratford-upon-Avon had lately caused to be repaired and set up a seat or pew in the Body of the said Church, adjoining to the seat of William Combe, Esquire and to an arch on the North side of the Church and had lately appointed the same for a kneeling place for hearing Divine Service and Sermons to Mr. John Hall, practitioner of Physik, his wife and family whom they without consent have settled. It was thereby witnessed that the Bishop of Worcester confirmed to John Hall and Susanna, his wife the said seat.'

practitioner of physic' – not a licence, but clear episcopal recognition of his status (Thornborough 1635).

This growing antagonism may be behind the odd timing of Hall's agreement to join the Corporation in 1632, when relationships were already soured. It might have suited the vicar to have an ally there, while at the same time the burgesses could feel that Hall had at last recognised their importance. If this was an attempt to manage the problem, it failed, as did all other attempts. The

bitter quarrel continued until Wilson's death in 1638. The underlying causes may have been tensions within Puritanism itself, and a growing gap between clerical and lay understandings of their roles (Hughes 1994: 71). Stratford was not unique in experiencing such tensions, and the change of Church policies under Charles I and Archbishop Laud may have created other hidden tensions (Marshall 2012: 149). Whatever the reason, when Hall was forced to make a choice he was more committed to his Church than to his civic responsibilities.

John Hall's medicines

Hall's references to physiology and pathology follow the traditional Galenic and Hippocratic model of four humours – blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile – which had to be balanced individually for good health. Imbalances might be due to incorrect diet, improper digestion, or blockage of excretion via the digestive system, urine, menstruation or through the skin. Corrupted humours were thought to accumulate beneath the skin until they broke out, as in smallpox or measles.

Hall's therapies, though, were taken from both Galenic and chemical texts. In the terms of his period, he was neither a Galeno-Hippocratic dogmatist nor a Paracelsian, but a Chymiatrist, drawing on both (Moran 2005: 82). Galenic and chemical remedies were both derived from minerals as well as animals and vegetables, but more important than the ingredients was the method of preparation. The chemical system favoured distillation to produce essences from raw materials, while traditional methods relied more on extraction with water or oil (Moran 2005: 12).

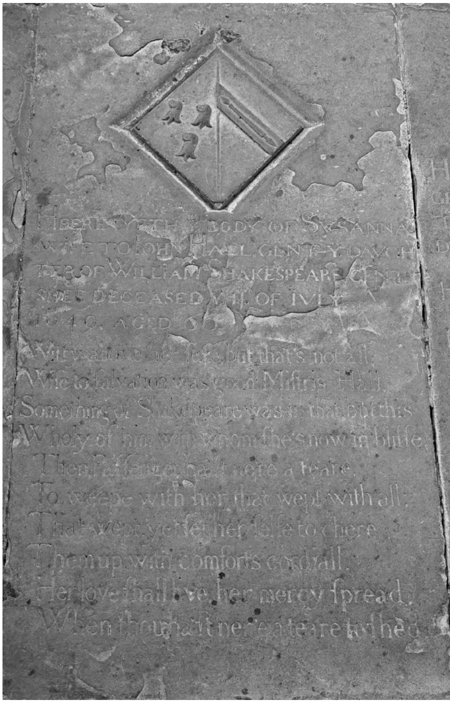
Hall was neither greatly advanced nor conservative in his practice. He saw himself as a specialist in scurvy, more knowledgeable about diagnosis than his colleagues. He bled fewer of his patients than most of his textbooks recommended, but purged almost everyone who was not elderly, pregnant or a child, before starting

specific treatments. He relied on uroscopy (visual examination of the urine) a great deal, though this was already becoming old-fashioned. He went on buying new medical books all his life.

Physicians were trained in the use of simples prepared from a single ingredient, as well as compounds containing perhaps dozens of simples. Hall used traditional European simples and newer ones from the Americas and Far East such as guaiacum and sarsaparilla. The *Pharmacopoeia Londinensis* in 1618 listed 680 simples, 47 of which are metals. About 80 per cent of Hall's compound remedies are listed in the *Pharmacopoeia*. He also used several chemical pharmacopoeias, such as *Basilica chymica* (Croll 1609).

It is obvious from reading Hall's *Little Book of Cures* that he kept a certain amount of essential herbs in stock for, as it were, immediate use. If he went out to see a patient in the neighbourhood, he used a standardised treatment very often on the first day: a purgative, to clear the humours, for which he must have had the most relevant herbs and ingredients close to hand in order to refill his travelling bag as required. These included mainly senna and rhubarb. Hall would not have mixed these himself, but instead would have sought the services of a local apothecary. His family would have grown some herbs, and collected some for use, but a herb garden would have been mainly for their own domestic use and pleasure. The local apothecaries would have been responsible for buying ingredients and having them sent up from London. The records show that some things were not always instantly available, which meant that an alternative was used instead. Hall would not have undertaken any kind of surgery on a patient; there were surgeons in the locale.

It is worth considering his wife Susanna's role in Hall's medical practice. It was automatically the job of the wife of the head of the household to provide first-aid care for her family, servants and anybody else who became became part of the household. It is reasonable to imagine a division of labour. Hall would have had his professional medicines, Susanna her own preparation of



7 Susanna Hall's gravestone and epitaph, which reads:

> Witty above her sex, but that's not all,
> Wise to salvation was good Mistress Hall,
> Something of Shakespeare was in that, but this
> Wholly of him with whom she's now in bliss.
> Then, passenger, ha'st ne'er a tear,
> To weep with her that wept with all?
> That wept, yet set herself to cheer
> Them up with comforts cordial.
> Her love shall live, her mercy spread,
> When thou ha'st ne'er a tear to shed.

Cordials of the kind for which she is remembered were used during recovery, the third phase of treatment (after purgation and treatment for the specific illness). They strengthened the patient's heart, and would probably have been delivered from London in the form of crushed powder (and bought by Hall from a local apothecary).

herbs and distillations which she would use initially to look after the household. This suggestion is emphatically borne out by the inscription on her gravestone. It seems pretty clear that she cared for a community, and 'with comforts cordial'; in other words she had a good reputation for knowing how to use certain kinds of medicines and administering these to the townspeople. Part of her profile in the town was probably that of the well-to-do wife of a physician, with something of an elevated wise woman about her. People would have known that they could consult her and ask for her help and advice: the famous local poet's daughter, and the physician's wife. No doubt this kind of consultancy continued after Hall's death (she outlived him by fourteen years).

Opening up John Hall's *Little Book of Cures*

Hall would be a significant figure in the history of medicine even without the Shakespeare connection, for physicians' records from the early seventeenth century are rare. Hall's *Little Book of Cures* is in many respects unique, being a detailed record of the practice of a provincial physician, associated with neither the Court nor the London College. He composed it in Latin, mostly between 1634 and his death in 1635. Hall's choice of Latin is curious. If he planned to publish the book, it suggests a desire to emulate Continental writers rather than add to the, by then, growing number of English-language medical texts.

The small notebook, now in the British Library, contains 178 case reports of varying length, dated between 1611 and 1635, in roughly chronological order. Hall must have gone through his original notes, looking for and copying out cases of interest. Most were cases with successful outcomes, as was customary in the current medical literature, but he included some which puzzled him, including unexpected deaths. James Cooke, a Warwick surgeon, obtained the manuscript from Susanna in 1642, translated it and eventually published it in 1657, and a second edition followed (Hall

1679). Cooke was a surgeon with the Parliamentary forces based in Warwick during the Civil War, and already the author of a textbook on military surgery: *Mellificium chirurgiae, or the Marrow of Many Good Authors, wherein is briefly and faithfully handled the Art of Chirurgery* (1648). Cooke was eager to play down Hall's indebtedness to tradition and to emphasise his originality, so he left out material that contradicted this view, including several of Hall's references to his sources. Cooke's second edition has been reproduced twice in facsimile (Joseph 1964; Lane 1996). Joan Lane's commentary is particularly useful for her detailed social studies of Hall's patients. These editions have made Hall's notes relatively accessible, and useful to historians of medicine (Beier 1987; Nagy 1988; Wear 2000). The vividness of his clinical descriptions has also made him a popular source for medical writers with an interest in history (Moschowitz 1918; Betts and Betts 1998; Pearce 2006; Fernandez-Florez 2010).

Hall's *Little Book of Cures* refers to several of Shakespeare's family members and friends. Within the family Hall treated himself, his wife Susanna and daughter Elizabeth, Elizabeth's mother-in-law Mary Nash, and George Quiney, Judith Shakespeare's brother-in-law. He also treated Richard Tyler, Thomas Russell's daughter and son-in-law, Francis Collins's daughter Alice and Thomas Greene's daughter Anne, several members of the Rainsford family at Clifford Chambers, their friend the poet Michael Drayton, and William Combe's mother-in-law, wife and daughter. It is likely that he also treated his father-in-law, but the clinical details did not strike him as worth recording.

Hall's cases in the *Little Book of Cures* are mostly drawn from the middling well-to-do tradesmen and more educated citizens of Stratford (teachers, clergy and lawyers), and the gentry (including some Roman Catholics) in the surrounding countryside. Among the nobility, he treated the families of the Earls of Northampton and Shrewsbury, and of Lord Saye and Sele near Banbury. Naming important patients was commonplace in medical

literature at the time, a way of providing evidence for a physician's success. Payment is only rarely mentioned. The Countess of Shrewsbury gave him 'great thanks, with a large payment' for successfully treating her son, and Lady Puckering's companion, Mrs Iremonger, rewarded him 'so that I might help others' (Hall 1635: 54, 91; see pp. 131 and 171). He also treated Mr Nash's serving maid and a poor man named Hudson, along with many others who cannot be identified. We should not assume that the patients he recorded are typical of his practice as a whole.

Hall composed his manuscript in an unusual way, perhaps because his Latin was limited outside of professional study. Over a third of his text is made up of phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs borrowed from his medical textbooks and rearranged to suit the circumstances of his own patients. Throughout the English translation, these borrowings are printed in italics and their sources referenced at the foot of the page. He used this method to describe patients, illnesses and outcomes, as well as for details of remedies. Usually he gave no reference, and it is only the existence of searchable online databases that has enabled his sources to be identified. The cases of his daughter and wife are good examples of his methods of composition and practice.

Elizabeth suffered from *tortura oris* (spasm of one side of the mouth) in January 1624. Hall gives a reference for the signs, then started her treatment with a purge and an ointment (Valesco 1560: 88–90; Platter 1602: 387). Elizabeth recovered after further purging, anointing and treatment for absence of menstruation. The condition recurred in April, and Hall referred to chapters on the disease and its treatment in several texts (Houllier 1611: 96–99; Platter 1602: 375; Rondelet 1574: 101v–102v; Amatus Lusitanus 1556: 394–396). Treatment continued with ointments and purgatives and was eventually successful. Cooke's bald translation that 'she eat [*sic*] nutmegs often' has been taken as Elizabeth's personal quirk, but he omitted Hall's statement that this was 'as Platter strongly recommends', as well as all the other references (Hall

1679: 33; Hall 1635: 36; see p. 113). The case report concludes 'all her symptoms diminished, and daily over a few days she reached complete health, freed from death and deadly illness' (Ruland 1628: 217; Hall 1635: 37; see p. 119).

Hall treated his wife, Susanna, for scurvy, a disease for which he regarded himself as a specialist. He relied mainly on two standard textbooks: Eugalenus's *De scorbuto morbo liber* (1604) and Sennert's *De scorbuto tractatus* (1624). Scurvy was at that time thought to be a severe disease of the spleen due to excess of black bile (melancholy). It had been described in travellers' accounts and medical texts from the early sixteenth century onwards, and treatment with antiscorbutic herbs such as scurvy-grass, watercress and brooklime was standard by the 1590s. There was nothing particularly advanced in Hall's treatments, though Cooke made much of them. Rather, Hall prided himself on his ability to diagnose a notoriously tricky disease that often mimicked other conditions. In his report on Bishop Thornborough's scorbutic arthritis he borrowed a sentence from Eugalenus: 'The false appearance of the arthritis deceived and made sport of his physicians' – even though Hall regarded them as 'experienced and learned in traditional medicine' (Eugalenus 1604: 97; Hall 1635: 161; see p. 252).

Susanna suffered from 'lower backache, convulsions, diseased gums, foul-smelling breath, wind, melancholy, heartburn, spontaneous tiredness, difficulty in breathing, fear of choking, tightness and torment of the abdomen', all of which together pointed to scurvy (Hall 1635: 115; see p. 198). Hall applied plasters and liniments to her abdomen and lower back, and prescribed an antiscorbutic electuary (Sennert 1624: 674). The cure was completed with steeled wine (wine boiled with steel filings) mixed with a large number of antiscorbutic herbs, the recipe of a leading French chemical physician (Du Chesne 1607: 74).

A few independent witnesses indicate how Hall was regarded by his patients. Lady Tyrrell wrote an undated letter to her friend Lady Temple sympathising with her husband's mischance, and

Good Mr Hall

I sent my boy to you this morning to carry my water & acquaint you wth what danger & extremitie I am fallen into in respect my shortnes of breath & obstructions of my liver, that I cannot sleep nor take anie rest, and although I have more need to use yor presence this daie than to staye untill to morrowe yet in regard of the multitude of yor affaires being the Markett daie, yet I will hoped you would not have failed me to morrowe morning being fridaie at 7 of the clock in the morning, for I will not eat or drinck untill I see you; My owne Servant is not yet returned from Stratford, but about dynner time this daie, I receiued a note from you heere that you cannot be here at Bushwood wth me to morrowe in respect of some private meeting at yor Hall concerning the affaires of yor Towne you saie you are warned to be there & if you be absent you are threatned to be fined, I did not expect to have receiued such a kinde of excuse from you, considering the dangerous estate I am in, as maie appeare by my water, & the relation of my servant whom I sent to you this morning of purpose, & therefore I think it is not anie Towne buisines that can hinder you but rather that you have promised some other patient & would put me off with this excuse: And if it were so indeed that you were sommoned & warned to appeare as you wright & for not appearance to be fined, it is verie strange to me, & unheard off that a Phisitian should be incorporated of anie Towne or made a Member of anie corporation not onlie to interrupt his Studies, hinder his practise but also to indanger the lief of his patient for want of his presence, because in a tedious and

8 and 9 A letter of complaint from Sidrick Davenport to John Hall remonstrating with him for sending an excuse for not coming to see him on the morrow. He says that he is dangerously ill (though he was apparently well enough to write a 616-word letter). A full transcript can be found on pp. 24–25.

& dangerous disease his presence is to be preferred
before his private occasions, for what cannot a daie
bring fourth & a little error causeth a relapse wch
is worse then the disease, I know my disease is perilous
& procrastination is dangerous, I have relied on you
I trust you will not faile me now, I know you cannot
be fined for visiting yor patients, neither the Towne
so barren of able men, nor the Magistrates so ~~different~~
indiscreet to lay this burthen upon you whose profession
is to be most abroad & cannot be effected by an
apprentice as theirs maie, & for you to be vexed wth ye
Towne businesse whose calling is out of Towne it would
seme a great folly in you & more mallice in them to
require: Therfore I councell you as a friend never be
bounde, as long as you may be free you shall but
derogat from yor selfe, heape a great deale of troubles
upon you distract you from yor Studie wch deserveth
the whole imployment of ani Man, had he a 100
yeres to lyve longer: Therfore I pray you all
excuses set a part that you will be here to morrow
morning by 7 of ye clock for I will fast untill yor com-
ming I know you cannot incurr anie danger having
so lawfull a calling. Thus with my best wishes &
hartie love remembred to yor selfe & ye rest of my
good friends wth you I commit you to Gods holie
protection & ever remaine

Yor truly loving frend
& Servant

Sid: Davenport.

My brother Colmores Phisick is ended
& all is taken he staieth at home
purposelie to speak with you tomorrow
morning for further directions. /

Bushwood. thursdaie. 5o Julij 1632

praising his intention to consult Hall: 'I know by experience that he is most excellent'; Sidrick Davenport, however, wrote to Hall on 5 July 1632 complaining of his tardiness, and requesting an urgent visit: 'it is very strange to me, and unheard off that a physician should be incorporated of any Town or made a member of any corporation, not only to interrupt his studies but also endanger the life of his patient for want of his presence' (Joseph 1964: xi, 27–28). Patients sometimes refused to follow Hall's advice, and several in particular refused to be bled.

A full transcription of Davenport's letter reads as follows:

> Good Mr Hall I sne my boy to you this morning to carrie my water & acquaint you with what daunger & extremitie I am faullen into in respect of my shortness of breath & obstructions of my liver, that I cannot sleep nor take anie rest, and although I have more need of yr presence this diae than to stay untill to morrow yet in regard of the multitude of yr affairs being ye Markett daie yet I well hoped you would not have failed me to morrow morning being fridaie at 7 of the clock in the morning, for I will not eat and drink until I see you, My owne Servante is not yet returned from Stratford, but about dynner time this daie I received a note from you howe that you cannot be here at Bushwood with me to morrow in respect of some private meeting at yr hall concerning the affairs of yr Towne you saie you are warned to be there & if you be absent you are threatened to be fined, I did not expect to receive such a kinde of excuse from you, considering the daungerous estate I am in, as maie appear bie my water, & the relation of my servant whome I sent to you this morning of purpose, & therefore I think it is not anie Town business, that can hinder you but rather that you have promised some other patient & would put me off with this excuse: And if it were so indeed that you are summoned & warned to appear as wright & for not appearance to be fined, it is verie strange to me. & unheard off that a Phisitian should be incorporated of anie Towne or made a Member of anie corporation, not onlie to interrupt his Studies, hinder his practice but also to indaunger the liefe of his patient for want of his presence, because in a tedious & dangerous disease his presence is to be preffered before his private occasions, for what cannot a daie bring fourth & a little error causeth a relapse

wch is worse than the disease, I know my disease is p[ar]lous & procrastination is daungerous. I have relied on you I trust you will not faile me now, I know you cannot be fined for visiting yr patients. Neither the Towne so barren of able men, nor the Magistrates so indiscreet to lay this burthen uppon you whose profession is to be most abroad & cannot be effected by an apprentice as theirs maie, & for you to be vexed with Towne buissenes whose calling is out of Towne it would seem a great folly in you & more malice in them to require. Therefore I councell you as a friend never be bounde as long as you may be free you shall but derogate from yr selfe, heap a great deale of troubles upon you distract you from yr Studie wch deserveth the whole employment of anie Man, had he a 100 yeres to lyve longer: Therefore I pray you all excuses set apart that you wilbe here to morrow morning by 7 of ye clock for I will fast until ye come, and I know you cannot incur anie daunger having so lawfull a calling. Thus with my best wishes & hartie love remembered to yr self & ye rest of my good friends with you I commit you to God holie protection & ever remain

Yor trewly loving friend and Servant
Sid Davenport

My Brother Colemores Phisick is ended & all is taken he staieth at home purposely to speak with you tomorrow morning for futher directions.

Bushwood. thursdaie 5 July 1632 (Lane 1996: xxvi–xxvii)

The end of Hall's life

John Hall's ledger-stone in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, records that he died on 25 November 1635, aged 60. Hall's death was presumably unexpected, as he made a nuncupative will (orally in front of witnesses) the same day. His wife and daughter inherited everything except his 'study of books' which went to his son-in-law, Thomas Nash, 'to dispose of them as you see good' (Marcham 1931: 25). His manuscripts would have gone to one Mr Boles 'if he had been here', but as he was not 'you may son Nash burn them or do with them what you please'.

10 John Hall's gravestone and Latin epitaph, which can be translated as:

> Here is sited Hall, most renowned in the medical art,
> Awaiting the happy joys of the Kingdom of God.
> Such were his merits that he deserved to outlive Nestor in years,
> But indiscriminate time snatches away everyone on Earth.
> So that nothing may be lacking in his tomb,
> His most faithful wife is here,
> And he has her, his companion in life, now also in death.

Hall's epitaph reads almost like a tribute from Stratford-upon-Avon's citizens. The last three lines anticipate Susanna's being buried alongside him, and suggest that a place for her was already reserved.

Hall's will was dictated too hastily for the usual preamble expressing his faith, but the introduction to his own illness in the *Little Book of Cures* used texts from the Vulgate Old Testament and the physicians Valleriola and Ruland to the same purpose (Hall 1635: 150; see p. 239):

> Thou Lord, *hast power of life and death; thou leadest to the gates of hell, and bringest up again* [1 Samuel 2:6]. I confess *neither by human work, nor help from the art, nor advice, but only by your goodness and mercy you made me whole, and recovered me beyond all hope and expectation from the most severe and deadliest signs of a lethal fever, as if rescued from the jaws of hell and restored to perfect health* [Valleriola 1573: 1]. For this *I give thanks to you, most merciful God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who through your fatherly mercy has made me whole. Give me grace, that I may recognise and remember your blessings with a grateful mind* [Ruland 1628: 231].

The combination of texts stressing divine rather than human works, and the thanks for God's mercy, reflect the evangelical element in Hall's beliefs. In other cases too, he frequently attributed cures to divine grace, even when treating his Catholic patients.

This edition marks the first time that a full translation of Hall's *Little Book of Cures* has been made available. It is here that we come closest to Hall's medical and intellectual outlook, and his pastoral care, including prayers for his patients' recovery, and thanksgivings when they were cured.