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***SIR THOMAS
BROWNE AND HIS
'RELIGIO
MEDICI':
AN APPRECIATION***

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Sir Thomas Browne and his 'Religio Medici': An Appreciation

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Transcribed from the 1898 Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier edition by David Price, email ccx074@coventry.ac.uk

**SIR THOMAS BROWNE AND HIS
'RELIGIO MEDICI': AN APPRECIATION
WITH SOME OF THE BEST PASSAGES OF THE
PHYSICIAN'S WRITINGS SELECTED AND
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D. D.**

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Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier

Saint Mary Street, Edinburgh, and
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DEDICATED TO
SIR THOMAS GRAINGER STEWART
PRESIDENT OF THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
AT WHOSE REQUEST THIS APPRECIATION WAS DELIVERED
AS
THE INAUGURAL DISCOURSE
AT THE OPENING MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION
IN ST. GILES' CATHEDRAL ON THE 26TH JULY 1898
IN GREAT GOOD-WILL AND LOVE BY
ALEXANDER WHYTE

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The *Religio Medici* is a universally recognised English classic. And the *Urn-Burial*, the *Christian Morals*, and the *Letter to a Friend* are all quite worthy to take their stand beside the *Religio Medici*. Sir Thomas Browne made several other contributions to English literature besides these masterpieces; but it is on the *Religio Medici*, and on what Sir Thomas himself calls 'other pieces of affinity thereto,' that his sure fame as a writer of noble truth and stately English most securely rests. Sir Thomas Browne was a physician of high standing and large practice all his days; and he was an antiquarian and scientific writer of the foremost information and authority: but it is the extraordinary depth and riches and imaginative sweep of his mind, and his rare wisdom and wealth of heart, and his quite wonderful English style, that

have all combined together to seal Sir Thomas Browne with his well-earned immortality.

Sir Thomas Browne's outward life can be told in a very few words. He was born at London in 1605. He lost his father very early, and it must have been a very great loss. For the old mercer was wont to creep up to his little son's cradle when he was asleep, and uncover and kiss the child's breast, and pray, 'as 'tis said of Origen's father, that the Holy Ghost would at once take possession there.' The old merchant was able to leave money enough to take his gifted son first to Winchester School, and then to Oxford, where he graduated in New Pembroke in 1626. On young Browne's graduation, old Anthony à Wood has this remark, that those who love Pembroke best can wish it nothing better than that it may long proceed as it has thus begun. As soon as he had taken his university degree young Browne entered on the study of medicine: and, in pursuit of that fast-rising science, he visited and studied in the most famous schools of France and Italy and Holland. After various changes of residence, through all of which it is somewhat difficult to trace the young physician's movements, we find him at last fairly settled in the city of Norwich, where he spent the remainder of his long, and busy, and prosperous, and honourable life.

Dr. Johnson laments that Sir Thomas Browne has left us no record of his travels and studies abroad, and all Sir Thomas's readers will join with his great biographer in that regret. At the same time, as we turn over the pile of letters that Sir Thomas sent to his student son Edward, and to his sailor son Thomas, when they were abroad at school and on ship, we can easily collect and picture to ourselves the life