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THE GOVERNAL OF HEALTH

edited by A.R.D. KIERNANDER

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
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ABSTRACT

The Governal of Health is a text of historical and linguistic interest, having been printed by William Caxton about 1489, thus being the earliest medical work printed in English. No other detailed study of the text has been made, and it has not been used in the compilation of the *Oxford English Dictionary* or Kurath and Kühn's *Middle English Dictionary*.

The principal objective of this edition has been to establish a clear and accurate text based on a detailed study of the eight located manuscript versions of the treatise, with constant reference to the *Regimen Sanitatis* of which it is a translation. One good manuscript version (from B.M. Add. MS. 29301) was selected as a base and freely emended from the other versions wherever it was clear that errors or omissions had been made.

The introduction to the text contains descriptions of the eight manuscripts which have been located containing texts of *The Governal of Health*, together with notes on manuscripts containing versions of the *Regimen Sanitatis*, and on the surviving copies of Caxton's edition and other printed editions and facsimiles. (A discussion of the state of Caxton's text is found at the beginning of Appendix A).

A study of the language of the text is included, concentrating particularly on the vocabulary, with an account of those words which are used with meanings not recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary* or the *Middle English Dictionary* and those words which predate the first examples quoted in those dictionaries.

Finally in the Introduction there are notes on the authorship and date of the text. The precise date of the text remains uncertain; however it is established as a result of this study that the treatise, previously ascribed variously to John de Bordeaux and Bartholomeus, was written by John Mirfeld at St Bartholomew's Priory.

Transcriptions of Caxton's edition and of the *Regimen Sanitatis* (from BM. MS. Harley 3) are appended, and a full Glossary of all forms in the text is provided.

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