

News, Notes and Queries

cold and damp on the bodily economy, Dr. Renbourn distinguished a number of distinct historical periods. The first period extended from ancient times to the end of the seventeenth century. In this early period medical practice was based on the concept of four elements, four humours, and four temperaments. Associated with this concept was the idea of 'insensible perspiration'. It was believed that air, water vapour and effluvia could enter and leave the body by invisible pores in the skin as well as by the lungs. The second period discussed was the eighteenth century when various theories of chills and damp cold were put forward. The third period was the early nineteenth century when many studies were made of the physiology of the 'damp-cold' phenomenon. Finally, Dr. Renbourn dealt with the views put forward in the late nineteenth century. In concluding his paper, Dr. Renbourn pointed out that in the past damp cold was the concern of physicians who wrote lengthily on the subject. So-called logical arguments, subjective and personal impressions and coincidences were interpreted by them as representing objective truths. Today the expression 'damp-cold' is one largely used by laymen.

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JOHN SNOW AND THE INSTITUTE OF FRANCE

PRACTICALLY all that is known of John Snow's life is derived from the Biographical Memoir which Benjamin Ward Richardson published in Snow's posthumous masterpiece *On Chloroform and Other Anaesthetics*.¹ In this memoir, Richardson states that Snow accompanied an uncle, Mr. Empson, to Paris in 1856 and that during the visit he deposited at the Institute of France a copy of his work on Cholera, submitting it as an entry for the prize of 10,000 francs offered for the discovery of a means for preventing or curing the disease.² Richardson proceeds, 'The decision of the judges has since been published, but no note seems to have been made of Dr. Snow's researches'. In 1887 Richardson repeated these statements.³

By 1898 the Dictionary of National Biography had reached Snow's name and an article written by the late Sir D'Arcy Power contains the following:

To Snow's scientific insight was due the theory that cholera is communicated by means of a contaminated water-supply and his essay on the communication of cholera, which was first published in 1849, was awarded by the Institute of France a prize of 1,200l.⁴

Garrison's *History of Medicine* contains the following note:

John SNOW (1813-1858), of York, a London medical graduate of 1844, first stated the theory that cholera is water-borne and taken into the system by the mouth (1849) in an essay which was awarded a prize of 30,000 francs by the Institute of France.⁵

There are thus two contradictory statements, apart from the discrepancies in the sums mentioned. It seemed reasonable to approach the Institute itself to clear up the confusion and this was done with the kind help of Dr. G. Vourc'h, the distinguished French anaesthetist. He received the following reply:⁶

Institut de France.
ACADÉMIE DES SCIENCES.

PARIS, le 13 Avril 1950.

Les Secrétaires perpétuels de l'Académie des sciences à Monsieur G. VOURC'H, à Londres.
Monsieur,

Par une lettre en date du 27 mars, vous nous demandez des renseignements sur un médecin anglais nommé John SNOW, qui, vers 1854-56, aurait présenté à l'Institut un mémoire sur le choléra, en vue de concourir pour un prix de 10,000 francs offert à qui découvrirait le mode de transmission de la maladie.

John SNOW a, en effet, posé en 1855 sa candidature au prix qui venait d'être fondé par J.-R. Bréant, ancien directeur des essais des monnaies de France, qui, dans son testament, s'exprimait en ces termes:

'J'institue et donne après ma mort, pour être décerné par l'Institut de France, un prix de 100,000 francs à celui qui aura trouvé le moyen de guérir du choléra asiatique ou qui aura découvert les causes de ce terrible fléau, . . .

. . . Comme il est probable que le prix de 100,000 francs, institué comme je l'ai expliqué plus haut, ne sera pas décerné de suite, je veux, jusqu'à ce que ce prix soit gagné, qui l'intérêt dudit capital soit donné par l'Institut à la personne qui aura fait avancer la science sur la question du choléra ou de toute autre maladie épidémique. . . .'

Ce prix n'a jamais été décerné, mais les intérêts, conformément au vœu du testateur, ont été fréquemment attribués. Ils le furent pour la première fois en 1858 à L. Doyère et, actuellement, l'Académie des sciences attribue tous ans un prix de 20,000 frs sur cette fondation.

Nos archives possèdent deux lettres de John SNOW relatives à sa candidature, en dates des 7 mars et 13 octobre 1855. Les *mémoires imprimés qu'il avait remis* à cette occasion ont été déposés à la Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France.

R. Couvrier. Louis de Broglie.

It is thus established that John Snow did not receive the Institute's prize. We may be tempted to think that he ought to have had it but we must not forget that it was many years before even his own countrymen gave to his researches the praise and honour which they undoubtedly deserved.

G. EDWARDS

Beaconsfield, Bucks.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. SNOW, J. (1858) *On Chloroform and Other Anaesthetics*. Edited, with a memoir of the author, by B. W. Richardson. London: J. Churchill.
2. SNOW, J. (1858) *ibid.*, p. xxii.
3. RICHARDSON, B. W. (1887) *Asclepiad*, 4, 274.
4. POWER, D'ARCY (1898) *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, 53, 207.
5. GARRISON, F. H. (1929) *Introduction to the History of Medicine*, 4th ed., p. 661. Philadelphia.
6. Translation:

'In your letter of the 27th March you ask for information concerning an English doctor named John SNOW who about 1854-56 may have sent to the Institute a memoir on cholera in order to enter for a prize of 100,000 frs offered to the man who should discover the mode of transmission of the malady.

'John SNOW did in fact submit his candidature for the prize which had just been founded by J.-R. Bréant, former director of the French Mint who in his will expressed himself as follows:

"I institute, and give after my death, to be awarded by the Institute of France, a prize of 100,000 frs to the man who shall have found the means of curing Asiatic cholera or who shall have discovered the cause of this terrible scourge, . . .

" . . . As it is probable that the prize of 100,000 frs, instituted as I have explained above, will not be awarded at once, I wish, until the prize be won, that the interest on the said capital

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shall be given by the Institute to the person who shall have advanced our knowledge of cholera or of any other epidemic disease.”

“The prize has never been awarded, but the interest, in accordance with the wishes of the donor, has been frequently disbursed. It was given in the first instance in 1858 to L. Doyère and, in fact, the Académie des sciences gives each year a prize of 20,000 frs from this fund.

“Our records contain two letters from John Snow referring to his candidature, under the dates of March 7th and October 13th, 1855. The printed documents which he sent at that time have been placed in the Library of the Institute of France.”

A CASE OF CONJOINED TWINS

THE small village of Narborough in mid-Norfolk, a few miles north-west of Swaffham, is a picturesque spot in an agricultural district, on the banks of the little river Nar. The Hall was for generations the seat of the Spelman Family, many members of which are buried in the parish church of All Saints which contains many Spelman monuments, the earliest being a brass of 1496. The most famous of this family was the statesman and antiquary, Sir Henry Spelman, who died in London in 1641 and is buried, not with his kinsmen, but in Westminster Abbey.

In the parish register of Narborough, which begins in 1558, there is recorded a case of conjoined twins, baptized, probably on the day of birth, and buried four days later. The entries, in the year 1709, read as follows:

Maria filia Francisci Legate et Elizabethae uxoris ejus baptisata fuit 30 die Aprilis.
Mary daughter of Francis Legate and Elizabeth his wife buried 4 May 1709.

To the second entry is appended a note in Latin. As it is very unlikely that the parish clerk knew Latin, the note was therefore probably written by the vicar, the Rev. Benjamin Ingram, who was inducted to the benefice in 1692 and died in office, 26 November 1735. He is buried with his two wives in the nave of the church under a ledger-stone with a Latin inscription. As to the parents of the twins, there is nothing to indicate their rank or condition. The surname Legatt (var. Legat, Legate, Leggat, Leggett, etc.) is a frequent one in Norfolk. The note is as follows:

Huic Mariae a pectore ad femur usque secunda fuit adunata filia mortua quidem sed ejusmodi inter hanc et vivam communicatio ut hac spirante in illius corpore visibilis dabatur motio: biceps fuit hic foetus cujus capita quatuor sustentabant humeri totidem annexis non tantum brachiis sed et manibus, a pudendis etiam quae fuerunt duplicia in quatuor femora totidemque dividetatur crura necnon et pedes omnino perfectos.

This may be rendered as:

To this Mary a second girl-child was united from the chest as far as the thighs; and although it [i.e. the second child] was dead, yet between it and the living child there was some kind of communication, so that when the latter breathed a perceptible movement was visible in the body of the former. This foetus was two-headed and its heads were supported upon four shoulders, with as many arms and hands attached to them; from the pudenda, which were double, the body divided out into four thighs with as many legs and feet also, in all respects perfect.

Of the conjoined twins, one was regarded as dead at birth, and the baptism was accordingly confined to the survivor, one name only being bestowed. The question of the spiritual unity or duality of the twins which so perplexed the parents and the