

News, Notes and Queries

bifurcation of the carotid artery (carotid sinus) may provoke reflex bradycardia, fall of blood pressure and fainting.³ Hippocrates, Galen and Mattheus Curtius also observed that it was not the compression of the arteries in the neck, but of their bifurcation (carotid sinus) that might induce fainting or sleep. I therefore agree with the suggestion of Balourdass⁴ that if the old Greek physicians observed that compression of the arteries in the neck of man induced sleep, they did not perform compression of the arteries themselves but compressed the area of their bifurcation, the carotid sinus, and provoked a reflex fainting or sleep, in patients with a carotid sinus syndrome. The name 'carotis' has, therefore, its origin in the carotid sinus.

Andreas Vesalius gives, in his *Fabrica* the names of 'arteriae soporariae' or 'arteriae soporiferae' and not 'arteriae carotideae' to the arteries in the neck. Carolus Stephanus uses the terms 'arteriae apoplecticae', or 'arteriae lethargicae', or 'arteriae somni' and the Latin translations of the works of Arabian anatomists have the name 'arteriae subitini', originating from the Arabic word *subtat* (stupor, sleep).⁵

It seems therefore that the first observation that compression of the arteries in the neck of man provoked sleep must have been made in a patient with a carotid sinus syndrome in whom compression or stimulation of the baroreceptors of the carotid sinus area could have provoked fainting or sleep.

REFERENCES

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3. HEYMANS, C., and NEIL, E., *Reflexogenic Areas of the Cardiovascular System*, London, Churchill, 1958.
4. BALOURDAS, A., *Proc. Med. Assoc. (Athens)*, 1941, p. 132; *Med. Progr. (Athens)*, 1948, vol. 49.
5. HYRTL, J., *Onomatologia Anatomica*, p. 93 (Carotis), Wien, Braumüller, 1880.

GREEK ASSOCIATION OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

We are pleased to record the reorganization of the Greek Association of the History of Medicine, first established in 1927, under the presidency of Professor N. K. Louros with Associate Professor G. C. Pournaropoulos as General Secretary. Professor Louros is Director of the University of Athens 'Alexandra' Hospital, Member of the Greek Academy and the Council of Health. He received his medical training in the universities of Athens, Vienna, Munich, Berlin and Bern and is a specialist in obstetrics and gynaecology and child health. He was awarded a prize by the Institute of France for his scientific work and is a Member of the Academia Leopoldina. Dr. Pournaropoulos, who was educated at the University of Athens and the Institute of

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Tropical Diseases of Lisbon University, is Health Director of the Greek Ministry of Health and Lecturer in the History of Medicine in the University of Athens. He is a member of the German, Swiss and American societies of the History of Science and has published work on the history of ancient Greek and Byzantine Medicine.

The re-formed society proposes to issue a new journal on the History of Medicine with the title *Hippocrates*.

F. N. L. POYNTER

LISTER CENTENARY CONFERENCE
ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND

An International Conference to commemorate the centenary of Lister's first publication establishing his 'antiseptic principle' was held at the Royal College of Surgeons of England, 2-6 April 1967, under the patronage of Her Majesty the Queen. The theme of the Conference was 'Safe Surgery: the understanding and avoidance of morbidity and mortality associated with operation and injury'. The bodies co-operating with the College in the organization of this conference were: The Royal Society, The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, the University of Edinburgh, the University of Glasgow, the University of London, University College Hospital, King's College Hospital, the Lister Institute of Preventive Medicine, the Wellcome Trust, and the Ciba Foundation.

The main scientific sessions were preceded by a Historical Session entitled 'The Man who made Surgery Safe' and under the chairmanship of Professor Sir John Bruce at which the following papers were presented: Dr. F. F. Cartwright, *Lister—the Man*; Prof. Sir Ashley Miles, *Lister's Contributions to Microbiology*; Dr. F. N. L. Poynter, *The Contemporary Scientific Background of Lister's Achievement*; Prof. Fritz Linder, *The Propagation of Lister's Ideas*.

A comprehensive historical exhibition of MSS, letters, apparatus, instruments and illustrations relating to Lister and his work was on view in the College through the month of April. A special illustrated guide was published for the occasion. Part of the material included in this exhibition may also be seen in the Lister Centenary Exhibition which will be open to the public in the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum from the end of May onwards.