

by this term. On the other hand, Galen (*De locis affectis*, ch. 3, 14) must be credited with a competent description<sup>5</sup> of this disease, including the signs of urinary and faecal incontinence. This remarkable passage, however, does not mention the name paraplegia and has therefore not been indexed. Galen's conclusions regarding the site of the lesion were attained by reasoning only and not by post-mortem findings.<sup>6</sup>

The following Talmudic report, though very concise, contains the signs and symptoms of paraplegia, a discussion of the differential diagnosis, and—most strikingly—a verification of the diagnosis by post-mortem examination. The case belongs to veterinary medicine as it deals with a sheep. The purpose of the discussion is that of a ritual decision since meat of animals suffering from certain serious diseases, among them some bone lesions, is not permitted to be eaten according to the ritual code.

The text on p. 51a of the tractate Hulin (the writer's translation) runs:

A sheep in the house of Rabbi Habiba was dragging its hind legs. Said Rabbi Yemar: it is suffering from shigrona [sciatica or a rheumatic condition]. To this Ravina objected: perhaps the filament of the vertebral column [spinal cord] is disrupted? They examined post mortem and found it according to Ravina.

That a traumatic etiology was considered may be surmised from the context. A few lines before and after the quoted case other cases are presented: that of an animal falling from a roof and those with injuries to the spine.

Thus a case of paraplegia in an animal is described in the Babylonian Talmud. A neurological lesion with its location is proposed *intra vitam* and is followed by dissection to confirm it by anatomical findings.<sup>7</sup>

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2. e.g. Hippocrates, *Epidemics I*, 13; p. 166 in the Loeb's Classical Library edition.
3. LITTRÉ, E., *Œuvres complètes d'Hippocrate*, 10 volumes, Paris, 1839–61; see X, 599, § 60.
4. Kühn's edition of Galen, 20 vols. in 22, Leipzig 1821–33; see VIII, 211; cf. the French translation on page 580 in: Ch. Daremberg, *Œuvres . . . de Galien*, tome II, Paris, 1856.
5. 'En lisant ce traité il ne faut pas oublier que Galien a en vue plutôt le diagnostic rationnel ou médiat, que le diagnostic physique ou direct, ou encore immédiat' [Translator's note on *Des lieux affectés* by Ch. Daremberg, I. c., p. 468].
6. Cf. the monumental English edition: *The Babylonian Talmud*, translated under the editorship of Rabbi Dr. J. Epstein, London, the Soncino Press, 34 vols., 1948–52; see Hulin, pp. 276–7.
7. Cf. PREUSS, J., *Biblich-talmudische Medizin*, Berlin, 1911 [1922, 1923], p. 355.

#### PHYSICIANS OF ANCIENT EGYPT

In these days of specialization there are few medical men who can earn international recognition in a subject so recondite as Egyptology. Dr. Frans Jonckheere of Brussels, surgeon and gynaecologist, won a unique place for himself as the historian

## Obituary

of medicine in ancient Egypt before his death at the early age of fifty-three in March 1956. He did not visit Egypt until 1939, when he was thirty-six, and he became so fascinated with the remains of its ancient civilization that on his return to Brussels he embarked on a course of study with Jean Capart, Director of the Queen Elizabeth Foundation for Egyptology. It was Capart who persuaded him to concentrate on the medical aspects of Egyptology, and the result was three authoritative books\* and a host of papers. The third of his important monographs on Egyptian medicine has just been published by the Foundation, whose Director did so much to launch Dr. Jonckheere on his second specialty. From a study of the extant papyri Jonckheere assembled sufficient material on the medical practitioners of ancient Egypt to compile what is almost a biographical dictionary. It is astonishing that so many personal names have survived with some indication of the medical offices which they filled. A valuable feature of this erudite work is the references to the reproductions of portraits to be found in archaeological books and journals.

F. N. L. P.

## Obituary

JOHN RITCHIE, M.D., F.R.C.P.Ed., D.P.H. (1882-1959)

DR. JOHN RITCHIE died in Edinburgh on 24 December 1959. He was a distinguished medical historian who frequently contributed to the pages of *Medical History*, his last being a paper on James Henrysoun, Chirurgical to the Poore, published posthumously (January 1960). Keenly interested in all aspects of medical history, his especial interest was in plague and he made many important contributions on this subject. For several years he was engaged in a history of plague in Scotland, a work he completed shortly before his death. As editor of the *Caledonian Medical Journal* from 1933 until it ceased publication in 1939, Dr. Ritchie maintained the high level of historical articles for which this journal was renowned. His *History of the Laboratory of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh* (1953) was a fitting tribute to an institution from which so much original work had emanated.

With his old friend, Dr. Douglas Guthrie, he founded the Scottish Society of the History of Medicine in 1948, serving as its President from 1951-4. He seldom missed a meeting and invariably contributed to the proceedings, and to the energy and guidance of these two men the success and standing of the Society are largely due. His love for and knowledge of books was profound and the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh acknowledged this in full measure when he was elected its Honorary Librarian. Ritchie possessed the Oslerian touch in the way he caressed the tomes written by the old masters of medicine of whom he spoke as if he had known each one personally.

For all his knowledge and accomplishments Dr. Ritchie remained a humble man, beloved by all who knew him and we miss him sorely in the Society.

*Nullum quod tetigit non ornavit.*

\* *La Médecine égyptienne*. No. 1. *Une maladie égyptienne; Pnématurie parasitaire*, 1944. No. 2. *Le papyrus médical Chester Beatty*, 1947. No. 3. *Les médecins de l'Égypte Pharaonique; essai de prosopographie*, 1958, pp. 172, 24 plates. All published by Fondation Egyptologique Reine Elisabeth, Parc du Cinquantenaire, Bruxelles.