

### *News, Notes and Queries*

services had been developed. The inscription giving instructions for its use ends with the words 'comfort to the patient'.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### FOLK MEDICINE IN DUNDEE

IN his *Dundee Worthies* (1934), G. M. Martin, F.S.A., records two local therapeutic practices. On p. 47 he writes:

#### WARTS

Sixty or seventy years ago an epidemic of these skin troubles broke out and this 'quack' made a good living in the following peculiar manner.

His stock-in-trade was a large sheaf of straw and the afflicted paid him 1d. per wart for his 'cure' which was a joint from the stem for each wart.

The patient had to carry these joints of straw in his hand and find out where a funeral was taking place, and at the first movement of the horses, had to throw the joints under the hearse—'and all the warts faded again'.

And again on p. 49:

#### KINK HOAST

A knowing wag who played on the credulity of the working class by posing as the curer of the Kink Hoast (whooping cough) and gathered round him a large clientele. He possessed a well groomed donkey and as to whether or not he knew of the religious belief appertaining thereto it was never known. He moved from district to district taking up his stance in little frequented alleys or back yards and awaited the coming of a distracted mother with her coughing child. The mother handed the child under the donkey's belly from one side, to a waiting relative or friend at the other, and this was thought to be a certain specific for the troublesome complaint. The charge for a child in arms was 6d., but if a 'toddler' 4d.

The date of Martin's publication is 1934, but the greater part of the material recorded belongs to a considerably earlier period, and the writer fairly claims (p. 3) 'that many of these reminiscences would be lost by the passing of this generation'.

A. M. HONEYMAN

### TRAUMATIC(?) PARAPLEGIA AS REPORTED IN THE TALMUD

IN his interesting note K. Bryn Thomas<sup>1</sup> refers also to a case of paraplegia as mentioned in ancient literature. The name paraplegia is to be found several times in the Greek text of Hippocrates.<sup>2</sup> However, the reference is so brief and devoid of any specific details that W. H. S. Jones translates it: paralysis. Littré's index contains but one reference to '*paraplégique*',<sup>3</sup> and the expression there does not carry its modern connotation. The Kuhn edition of Galen<sup>4</sup> indexes paraplegia thirteen times, the meaning again not always corresponding to the clinical picture as understood today

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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#### REFERENCES

1. THOMAS, K. BRYN, 'Traumatic Paraplegia treated by Operation in 1841', *Med. Hist.*, 2, 228–30, 1958.
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