

## News, Notes and Queries

(*alpha* privativum plus *pheme*, “voice”, “I speak”). . . .’ And to the great clinician Trousseau who with rather petty, pedantic primness imposed on posterity his ‘Aphasia, recently described under the improper name of aphemia’, Broca wrote with fairly good humour this open letter in the *Gazette des Hôpitaux* of 1864:

And now allow me, my dear and learned master, to examine the criticism which you raise against the term *aphemia*. A modern Greek has told you that he was shocked by the use of such a dishonourable expression for honest patients. Aphemy, for him, is the synonym of infamy. I do not deny this; it would not be the first time in the evolution or regression of a language that a word has changed its meaning. *Aphemos*, among other things, meant a person of whom one does not talk. For a lady this was no doubt a form of praise, but a man likes to be talked about, and I can well understand that in a country which has upheld the memory of great men the epithet *aphemos* may give offence. Yet if the word *aphemia* survived your criticism, and still somewhat astonished our present-day Athenians, they could be compensated by looking back into the origin of their words, and no great harm done.—Another objection has been directed against the word *aphemia* by one of your students who is an expert on how to be rude. Applying this expertise to the dissection of that word he has discovered *aphemia* to mean a ‘secretion *apo-haima*’, i.e. bloody. This only shows that Greek, like French, may lend itself to punning—provided there be a display of wit, not rude but Gallic.

Thus the unspeaking had almost become the unspeakable. Rest in peace? Honest (more or less) Leborgne, brilliant Broca, you were not allowed to. Some fifty years later, Pierre Marie, re-examining among many others Leborgne’s brain, declared: ‘The third frontal convolution plays no particular part whatever in the function of speech.’ Yet Marie’s pupil Moutier, faithfully summing up his master’s devastating critique of Broca, had this to say: ‘It does not follow from picking holes in certain facts and their interpretations that one wishes to belittle the man who knew how to collect facts and formulate interpretations. . . . Broca’s aphasia has come to stay, and this is supremely right.’

And what is, after one hundred years, our own answer to Broca? The doubt he expressed in 1861 has, alas, a familiar ring:

If all cerebral faculties were as distinct and as clearly circumscribed as this one, we would finally have a definite point from which to attack the controversial question of cerebral localization. . . . In this respect science has so little advanced that it has not even found its base, and what is today in doubt is . . . the principle of localization itself.

FRANCIS SCHILLER

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## REOPENING OF THE WELLCOME HISTORICAL MEDICAL LIBRARY

AFTER extensive improvements which have made the Wellcome Library one of the best equipped of its kind in the world, the Library was formally reopened to the public on 25 September 1962, by Lord Brain, D.M., F.R.C.P., before a distinguished gathering

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of leading librarians, physicians, and medical historians, including representatives of American and continental universities.

In the unavoidable absence of Lord Piercy, the Chairman of the Wellcome Trust, the Chair was taken by his predecessor, Sir Henry Dale, O.M., now the Scientific Consultant to the Trustees. Sir Henry recalled that Wellcome was so accustomed to think of his pharmaceutical business and his collections as his sole property, that his Will, by which all profits from the business were to be distributed by five Trustees for the promotion of medical research and the establishment and improvement of medical libraries and museums, left the future of his own Historical Library and Museum entangled with the administration of his business and so outside the scope of the Trust's charitable work. This legal difficulty had now been overcome by the Trust's formal acquisition of the collections as part of its own property and their future was now assured as a part of our cultural heritage, whatever may be the financial or political hazards which the Company has to meet in the years to come. Acting in a bold and imaginative manner which would have rejoiced the heart of the Library's founder, the Trustees had signalled their new ownership by acquiring for the Library at a total cost of £80,000 the unrivalled collection of medical Americana formed by Dr. Francisco Guerra, who had been awarded a special Wellcome Research Fellowship so that he might prepare the published catalogue of the Library's American holdings. These had now been splendidly housed in the Library's new 'American Room', which was part of the new extension to the Library which Lord Brain had come to open. The Wellcome Trustees were sure that their guests, when they had inspected the transformed Library for themselves, would wish to join with them in congratulating the distinguished Chief Librarian, Dr. Noel Poynter, and his able team of associates, on their splendid contribution and on the prospect for medical and historical scholarship which had thus been opened.

After remarking on the transformations which had been effected in the Library, Lord Brain reminded his audience of the valuable purposes which these new facilities were designed to serve and drew a striking parallel between genetics and history to bring home to his audience the vital part which history had to play in producing a healthy and well-developed society. While not accepting the fashionable concept of the 'two cultures' he believed that history could do much to enlarge the understanding and extend the horizons of both scientists and humanists and to ensure the continuity of the single culture in which we all shared. Universities had to specialize, but a generation was growing up whose interests surmounted the boundaries between the special types of knowledge. History would help them to achieve this, and he hoped to see that advantage was taken of the arrangements now being made for organized parties of undergraduates to visit the Library, which he was very happy to declare opened.

Dr. Poynter thanked Lord Brain for taking time from his many engagements to carry out this ceremony and on behalf of the Wellcome Trustees presented Lord Brain with specially bound and inscribed copies of the *Catalogue of Printed Books* and the *Catalogue of Western Manuscripts* as a souvenir of this happy occasion. He went on to describe some of the interesting features of the new Library which the guests were invited to inspect. These included not only the American Room already mentioned, but a new Oriental Room housing the books and manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Chinese, Japanese, and other Eastern languages which Sir Henry Wellcome and his agents had collected but which were now accessible to scholars for the first time. The very large number of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century books which had formerly, for lack of space, been shelved on the main floor of the Reading Room,

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had been moved to specially designed bookstacks with controlled temperature and humidity so that they could be preserved in well-nigh perfect conditions. The space thus cleared had been handsomely laid out and furnished for readers and special exhibits, with a dais, lectern and public address system so that the room could be used at need for meetings of up to 150 people. A novel feature of the new extension was the Recording Room where distinguished workers in medicine and science would be invited to recall the circumstances of their pioneer work so that their words could be recorded for posterity, thus helping to build up a 'library of living history' which would supplement the manuscripts and printed books in which were recorded the great advances of the past. The importance of combining sound and vision was also clear in the 'guide-lecture equipment' which was fitted to all the exhibition cases. This consisted of earphones through which visitors may hear recorded commentaries on the items displayed. The display cases in the Entrance Corridor contained at present a series of books and manuscripts which were 'Landmarks in the History of Medicine' from Hippocrates to Sherrington, the commentaries on which lasted more than thirty minutes. Dr. Poynter said that the Library's aim was to serve the history of medicine at all levels, from that of the casual visitor and student to the scholarly level of those who wrote erudite works on the subject.

Among the items which attracted particular interest when the visitors inspected the Library after the official proceedings were the Vesalian screen at the rear of the dais, where the six muscle-men from the first edition of the *Fabrica* were enlarged to life-size on formica, and the temporary exhibition of 'The Evolution of Hospitals in Britain' which had been set up for the Third British Congress on the History of Medicine.

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### FACULTY OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE AND PHARMACY

#### THIRD BRITISH CONGRESS ON THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE AND PHARMACY

THE Third Annual Congress organized by the Faculty was held in London on 26–28 September 1962, under the presidency of Lord Amulree, being sponsored by John Wyeth and Brother Limited. The subject on this occasion was 'The Evolution of Hospitals in Britain', one which produced a series of unusually informative and valuable papers, which will be published in volume form in 1963.

More than 150 Congress members and guests attended the Congress registration at the Wellcome Historical Medical Library, only a day after the official reopening of the enlarged and transformed library, where a special exhibition on the Congress theme was on view. Before opening the Inaugural Session at Apothecaries' Hall the Chairman, Dr. W. S. C. Copeman, conferred the Faculty's Honorary Fellowship on Professor C. D. O'Malley, Professor of the History of Medicine at the University of California at Los Angeles. Subsequent sessions were held at The Royal College of Physicians (where also a Congress exhibit was displayed), the Royal Society of Medicine, and the Royal College of Nursing. By courtesy of the Treasurer and the Board of Governors of the Royal Hospital of St. Bartholomew, a reception was held for Congress members in the Great Hall of the Hospital on the evening of Thursday, 27 September, when visitors were able to see an important selection from the Hospital's archives arranged by the