Argyll Robertson, in his grey frock coat and top hat, was a classical figure in the days when such garments were de rigueur for the dignity of the doctor. His tall, athletic figure, his handsome features, his air of distinction, and his old-world courtesy made him a conspicuous figure in any professional assembly, and endeared him to students and colleagues alike. A great golfer, he won many medals in tournaments. He and his wife travelled around the world in 1894 and became close friends of the Thakar of Gondal in India. Before retiring to a farm in Jersey in 1900, and again in 1909, they went to India to see their regal friend, and it was there that Argyll Robertson died.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

CHAUNCEY D. LEAKE

References


MORITZ HEINRICH ROMBERG (1795–1873)

ROMBERG was a native of Meiningen, Thuringia, a part of Saxony. His medical studies were pursued at Berlin; where, at the age of twenty-two, he received the M.D. on the basis of a thesis in which he gave his classic description of achondroplasia ("congenital rickets").1 He soon devoted himself to the study of nervous disease, the first physician in history to give particular attention to altered structure related to clinical manifestations—the neurology as we know it today.
A trip to Vienna in 1820 gained him the friendship of Johann Peter Frank, who was not only a pioneer in the study of diseases of the spinal cord (1792), but also a founder of modern public health.

Portrait, courtesy of the National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Maryland.
giene, and a humanitarian; his influence on Romberg was considerable and lasting.

Romberg derived much of his background from contemporary English neuroanatomy and neuropathology in translating Andrew Marshall’s *The morbid anatomy of the brain, in mania and hydrophobia* (London, Longman & Co., 1815) into German in 1820, and, more significant still, Sir Charles Bell’s *The nervous system of the human body* (London, Longman & Co., 1830) in 1832. He was conscious of the importance of having brought Bell’s great landmark in neurology to the German-speaking world, for he stated: “The researches of Sir Charles Bell fill me with enthusiasm, and in 1831 I translated his great work and made known to my professional brethren in Germany his investigations which will ever serve as models of scientific inquiry.”

At the University of Berlin he was appointed Privatdozent for special pathology and therapy (1830), then Extraordinary (1838), and finally Director of the University Hospital (1840), where he began his study of patients, promptly recording his observations for inclusion in his textbook, which was published in parts from 1840 to 1846. Three editions were called for before 1857. This, the first systematic book on neurology, well documented with full references to the literature, deals in admirable fashion with such disorders as neuritis, causalgia, ciliary neuralgia, facial neuralgia, sciatica, neuromas, chorea, tetany, epilepsy and facial paralysis. Romberg’s discussion of tabes dorsalis, lucid in clinical details and brilliant in his surmise as to the site of the initial pathological changes, contains the classic remark that ataxies cannot stand with their eyes shut (Romberg’s sign): “Lässt man ihn in aufrechter Stellung die Augen schliessen, so fängt er sofort an zu schwanken und zu taumeln . . .” (ed. 1, 1846, p. 795). His description of progressive facial hemiatrophy (Parry-Romberg’s syndrome) appeared in 1845. Romberg was also a neuropathologist of note, and was made Ordinarius in special pathology and therapy in 1845.

Romberg collected and incorporated into his precise clinical pictures of neurological diseases the scattered reports of experimental investigations from many sources. He was acutely aware of the physiological work of Sir Charles Bell and of Magendie, and

the acceptance led to a division and the other English in 1851.)

References to
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MORITZ HEINRICH ROMBERG

the acceptance of the difference between sensory and motor nerves led to a division of his textbook into two sections, one on sensation and the other on motion. The German text was translated into English in 1853 and the volumes had a wide influence not only in Great Britain but also in America. Although Romberg's nosology, which included many kinds of "neuroses," was slowly abandoned as specific neurological and neuromuscular entities were recognized and pathogenesis revealed, Romberg deserves enduring fame for his success at bringing some order into neurological thought.

Romberg excelled as a teacher, and he was always intent on closest personal relations with his students. He was particularly self-effacing during the Berlin cholera epidemic, when in 1831 and 1837 he was in charge of cholera hospitals. He died of heart disease at the age of seventy-eight.

HENRY R. VIETS

References


References to Biography