

News, Notes and Queries

A FEMALE FOETUS, DRAWN FROM NATURE BY MR. BLAKEY FOR WILLIAM HUNTER

THIS self-explanatory manuscript (Fig. 1) is reproduced from one in a collection, known as the Blackburn Cabinet (after the donor of a chest in which the manuscripts formerly were housed), in the Hunterian Library, University of Glasgow. This collection, which consists largely of manuscripts of James Douglas, Hunter's friend and teacher, is at present being investigated, and a catalogue is in preparation. Beside the Douglas documents it contains many Hunteriana, of which this is the earliest.

In 1749, William Hunter was lodging with Douglas's widow, Martha, at her house in Hatton Garden, to which she had removed after her husband's death in 1742. William had been joined by John in 1748, and together they stayed with Mrs. Douglas till Michaelmas 1749, when he opened the lecture theatre in Covent Garden, close to the house of his old master, James Douglas.

The manuscript and drawings are here published for the first time; the neat crayon and chalk drawings (8 inches long in the original) are accompanied by Hunter's text, a model of elegant and accurate clinical writing, in his own hand.

Little is known of Mr. Blakey. He is presumably that Nicholas Blakey whom Benezit (*Dictionnaire des Peintres*, 1948) notes as an Irishman who worked chiefly in Paris, where he died in 1758. He is mentioned in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, but it is not recorded that he worked on anatomical subjects even though one of his drawings was published in a famous book (*vide* Fig. xxii in William Hunter's *Anatomy of the Gravid Uterus*, 1774). No other Blakey drawings have been found in the Douglas Collection.

I am deeply indebted to R. O. McKenna, Esq., M.A., Hunterian Librarian of the University of Glasgow, for much help, and to the University Court for permission to publish this manuscript.

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MEDICINE AND MANASSEH BEN ISRAEL

JUST over 300 years have passed since the readmission of the Jews into England was 'negotiated' through Cromwell—the Lord Protector. The petition on their behalf was presented to him by Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel, or as some spelt it, Menasseh ben Israel.

He was born Manoel Dias Soeiro, in 1604, of Marrano (Spanish-Jewish) parentage. Some say his birthplace was Madeira, others Lisbon. As was the custom with many Jewish well-to-do families of the period, he was trained for the Rabbinate, and took the name of Manasseh ben Israel. The close relationship between religion and medicine among the Jews have led some historians, notably Henry Milman (1863) to regard him as a physician as well as a Rabbi. Doubtless his acquaintance with the

A female fetus, drawn from Nature, by Mr Baker.

This fetus was 5 months and 3 days ^{old} by the mother's reckoning; i. e. she had missed the catamenial discharge five times, three days before her miscarriage. She quickened ten days before her miscarriage. She fell into pains & had a small flooding from a fright. I attended her, & soon found by the state of the womb (the cervix obliterated & the os since beginning to open) that all hopes of preventing an abortion were over.

When the orifice was just opened sufficiently to introduce one finger, I found the head of the fetus presenting & resting on the anterior part of the neck of the Womb internally; and that it was alive. I was assured by its starting sometimes upwards from my finger. Every thing went on as in a common labour & the fetus was sensibly alive after it was in the world.

Its body was the model of perfect nature; not emaciated from scanty nourishment or lingering death; not wasted or putrified from having been dead some time, nor injured by rude or unskillfull hands. The skin was glossy & transparent, & all the larger cutaneous vessels naturally injected with a florid blood.

I injected it minutely by the umbilical vein, & was happy enough to bring a bright red colour over the whole body, except the lower extremities, which because of their distance from the heart had their vessels more sparingly filled. After it was injected, this Drawing was made, which is both expressive of the object & accurate, except that 1. The whole body, but especially the head, trunk, & upper extremities are thicker & more fleshy than nature, because the vascular system is distended by the injection. 2. The cutaneous vessels, which were so distinct in the object before injection, could not be represented in the figure, because they were become invisible by the artificial redness of the skin.

Station Garden June 15th 1749.

William Hunter.

Fig. 1.

Original note in the hand of William Hunter.

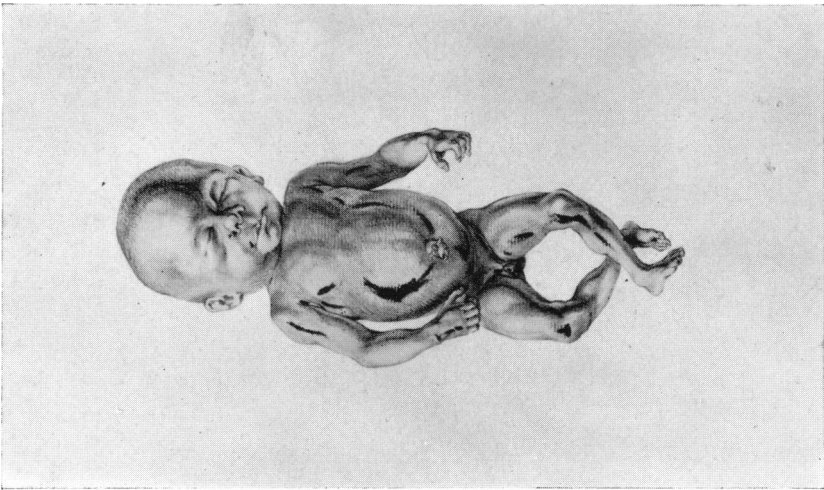


Fig. 2.
The foetus injected

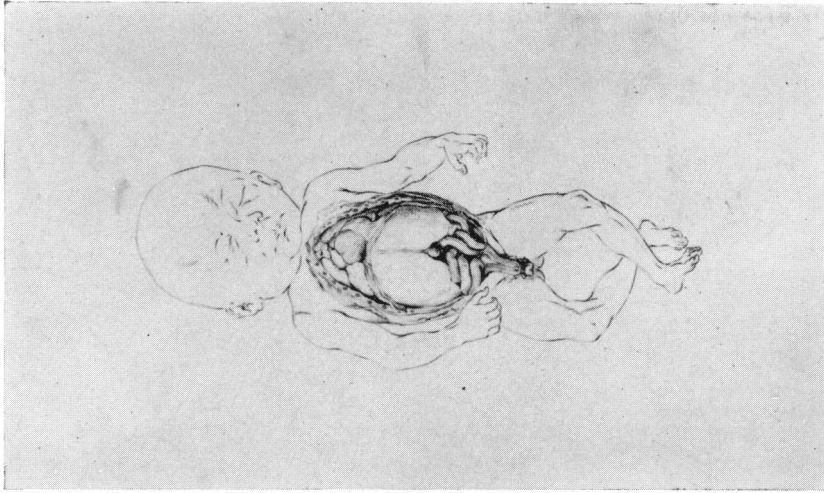


Fig. 3.
The foetus dissected

works of Hippocrates, Aristotle, Galen, Maimonides, and many others, helped him to acquire some knowledge of science and medicine, whilst familiarity with the Cabbala gave him experience of the occult—a good background for the psychosomatic approach!

In 1640 he was appointed Head of the Yeshivah in Amsterdam, and thus came in contact with Spinoza, who was a pupil in the school. He also corresponded with Hugo Grotius and other scholars. It is natural that this active contact with Dutch intellectuals should introduce him to Dutch university life. Dutch universities began to accept Jews during the first half of the seventeenth century, because they did not require them to take the Christian oath. The earliest medical reference by Manasseh is in the famous Vos letter to Van der Linden (Vosii Epistolae 536) 'Yesterday Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel came to me accompanied by Isaac Rocamora—a Portuguese Jew, who had been studying medicine for at least two years. He has made such progress that he is confident that his standard is such as to qualify him for the highest degree in the subject. This Rocamora has been warmly recommended by your friend Menasseh!'

The fate of refugees has a familiar ring. Amongst those helped by Manasseh were Abraham Zacutus and Orobio de Castro, who fled to Amsterdam from Portugal and Spain after the edict banishing all Jews from the peninsula, was promulgated. Zacutus had studied medicine at Coimbra and Salamanka, qualifying at the age of twenty-one years in 1596. He practised as a successful physician in Lisbon for thirty years before he was forced to flee to Amsterdam. He had come into contact with Manasseh, after a letter praising the latter's magnum opus—*The Conciliator*, a work in which Manasseh attempts to reconcile Old Testament discrepancies.

De Castro was born in 1620 and fled from Spain to Amsterdam where he lived until 1687. Manasseh quotes the following story about him. 'An Earle of Portugal, when his physician was imprisoned for being a Jew, requested one of the inquisitors to release him because he knew for certain he was a very good Christian!'

A Mantuan Jew, Abram Portaleone (1542–1612), was another notable physician to be praised by Manasseh for his work on Jewish antiquities. He qualified at Pavia in 1563, and was honoured by being appointed physician to William, Duke of Mantua, in 1577. It was not until 1591, however, that Pope Gregory permitted him to treat Christians.

Manasseh himself wrote two works that brought him fame. *De termino vitae* and *Nishmath Hayim* [on Immortality]. The latter was written in Hebrew, and is a religio-philosophical treatise. Unfortunately no English translation seems to be available. *De termino vitae* was published in 1639 in Amsterdam. It was written in Latin, but an excellent English version was made in 1655 by the Rev. Thomas Pococke, son of Edward Pococke, the celebrated orientalist who states that he had translated it for his own diversion and that 'others might have the same satisfaction and improvement that I had in the perusal'. In a pungent and witty preface, Pococke praises Manasseh for his 'modesty and humility'.

The book is not a miserable reflection on death, but abounds with sound advice on how to live a long and healthy life and how to meet death when it comes with equanimity—questions still unsolved today. He held that man's life may be shortened by divine providence, chance or nature. He agreed with Hippocrates and anticipates modern genetics and psychology when he says that 'an ill habit of body often proceeds from the parents—a choleric father begets a choleric son'. He maintains that a great variety of infirmities proceed from an ill digestion, if we offend against the rules

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of health by the quantity and quality of food, and the time and manner of our eating. He maintains that Man is created with free will and that it is in his power to make choice of life or death. Although life has a term, this is alterable. It may be prolonged by observation of God's laws.

His harsh words to his medical brethren have a timeless ring to them. He agrees with the Talmudists that 'a physician ought to be very careful about his patient's recovery, otherwise he may lose his own soul, for the best physicians sometimes go to Hell on this account.' Again, 'There are some (physicians) that pretend to cure a distemper which they do not understand, others do not take notice of the proper time to administer the physick, and there are others that leave all to chance and care not whether their patient lives or dies. It often happens that a sick man loses his life while the physicians are disputing about the nature of the disease! Perhaps for this reason, physicians are sometimes called Murderers. That consideration which should affect the patient, is that he must not too confidently depend on the Physician, or Natural Means, but chiefly put his trust in God!'

In 1650 he wrote *The Hope of Israel*, also in Latin. This was translated into Spanish, Hebrew and English. It was the last translation that brought him into contact with Jews in England and led to his invitation there in 1656, during which he lived for a short time in London in a house in the Strand. His joy at the success of his mission was short-lived, for in 1657 he died in Middelburg on the island of Walcheren in Holland, whilst bringing home the body of his son Samuel for burial.

Although Jewish law forbids the reproduction of the human image Manasseh's portrait was painted by his friend Rembrandt, who also made four etchings which are in the British Museum.

I. M. LIBRACH

SOCIÉTÉ INTERNATIONALE D'HISTOIRE DE LA MÉDECINE

THE XVIIth International Congress of the History of Medicine will be held at Athens and Cos from 4-14 September 1960, under the presidency of Prof. Sp. Oeconomos.

The themes of the Congress are:

- (i) Hippocrates and his School.
- (ii) The School of Alexandria.
- (iii) Byzantine medicine.
- (iv) Miscellaneous subjects having reference to Greek medicine.

The Secretary-General of the Congress is Dr. F. A. Sondervorst, 124 Avenue des Alliés, Louvain, Belgium, from whom further particulars can be obtained.

OSLER MANUSCRIPTS

THE manuscripts in the Osler Library of McGill University have been photofiled through the generosity of an anonymous benefactor and the positive films are now available for inter-library loan. These include all items listed under 'Manuscripts' in the index of the *Bibliotheca Osleriana*, 1929, except those of Osler's own writings, published, unpublished (his taboo), and (one) unpublishable.