

Boyden's findings are recorded in his masterpiece, *Segmental Anatomy of the Lungs*,⁵ which must be one of the most remarkable anatomical treatises of the century.

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WILLIAM PARGETER

AND THE MEDICAL SOCIETY OF OXFORD 1780-3*

WILLIAM PARGETER is remembered in the history of psychiatry for his *Observations on Maniacal Disorders* (Reading, 1792). In this he made one point, hammered home in six case-histories, which marked the beginning of serious experiments with moral treatment in the management of the insane at a time when they were routinely physicked and restrained, not to say maltreated. He demonstrated that contact could be made with patients however severely disturbed, and that *rapproch*, once established, rendered physical restraint unnecessary and could influence favourably the course of the illness and sometimes indeed initiate recovery. Although his method of catching or 'setting' the patient with his eye may seem primitive, the humanitarian principle underlying it was sound.

Pargeter came of an old Northamptonshire family. He was born in 1760, the son of Robert Pargeter, Rector of Stapleford in Hertfordshire. In January 1777 he entered New College Oxford and graduated B.A. in 1781. Two years later he proceeded to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, where he came under the influence of William Austin whom he had got to know and perhaps assisted at Oxford, and David Pitcairn who was particularly interested in insanity† and a Governor of Bethlem Hospital. Among his contemporaries there were Andrew Marshal and John Haslam, both well known for their contributions to psychiatry, but like theirs his name does not appear in the Hospital's books.

In November 1786 he graduated M.D. Marischal College Aberdeen by paying the usual fee of £25 and producing letters of recommendation from Drs. Martin Wall and William Austin. For a time he appears to have practised in London and then in and around Reading. In 1795 he published anonymously *Formulae medicamentorum selectae*, but on the title-page somewhat unfortunately 'By the Author of Maniacal Observations'. This small 12mo of 58 pages, known by a single copy in the Library of the Pharmaceutical Society, added nothing to his reputation and is of interest only as a forerunner of pocket hospital pharmacopoeias. The same year he gave up medicine, entered the Navy as chaplain, served at the Battle of the Nile, and finally

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† See Sir Alexander Crichton's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Mental Derangement*, 1798, dedication and vol. 1, p. 281; and Bethlem Hospital Minute Books, quoted by permission of the Governors of King Edward School, Witley, Surrey.

became chaplain to the garrison of Malta. There he published, again anonymously, *A sermon . . .*, 1801, commemorating the funeral of Sir Ralph Abercrombie, Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean. In 1802 he retired to Bloxham where his grandfather had been vicar, and died there on 17 May 1810.

This in outline is all that was known about him until, through the courtesy of Mr. C. P. Finlayson, Keeper of Manuscripts, Edinburgh University Library, we were able to examine a volume of minutes of the Medical Society of Oxford 1780–3,* a student society in which Pargeter played a prominent part. So far as we know, it has not before been included in accounts of English medical societies. For this reason and for the glimpses it gives of Pargeter and some famous contemporaries at Oxford a brief account of it is given here.

The volume is a notebook of quarto format containing 186 folios, of which only the first 38 have been written on. It is bound in white vellum and labelled in ink on the spine and on the front cover 'Minutes'. On the paste-down inside the front cover is the title 'Minutes of the Medical Society of Oxford'; above it the press mark 'Thom-Aa-15-' (presumably the private library press mark of 'Mr. Thomson' who joined the Society in 1783 and whose name appears in full at the top of folio 1), and below the University of Edinburgh Library press mark.

The Society was incorporated as follows:

We, the Undersigned, Medical Students of the University of Oxford, met together on this first day of November A.D. 1780 having agreed to unite in a body for the Promotion of Medical knowledge within these walls, do hereby incorporate ourselves under the Name of the Medical Society of Oxford. And to the Intent that the order of such Society be preserved, & the Institution maintained to future Ages, we do upon full deliberation enact. . . .

Then follow thirteen articles: membership confined to medical students; the president to be B.A. or M.A.; the secretary to keep a book of proceedings; the Society to meet weekly on Friday evenings from 6 to 8; members in rotation to read a paper 'on some subject intimately connected with Medicine' of their own choice; subscription to be 6*d.* per week to provide books, 'chymical apparatus' or whatever else was thought desirable; non-attendance to be excused only on grounds of illness or absence from the University; penalty for failing to give a paper 5*s.*; meetings to be held in members' chambers pending the provision of a room at Queen's College for the purpose; disorderly conduct or gross misbehaviour to lead to expulsion.

The six founder-members in the order in which they are listed were (1) John Sibthorp M.A. of Lincoln College, President (in 1784 he succeeded his father as Sherardian Professor of Botany); (2) S. Bernard, B.A., Christ Church College (of New Jersey, America, later Sir Scrope Bernard-Tyrringham-Morland, Bt., M.P., and Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department); (3) Clement Nicolson, Queen's College, Secretary; (4) John Latham, Brasenose College (later physician to St. Bartholomew's Hospital and President of the Royal College of Physicians); (5) William Austin, B.A., Wadham College (and one of Pargeter's sponsors for the M.D.); (6) William Pargeter.

(7) John Mayo of Brasenose, later physician to Middlesex Hospital, joined on 26 January 1781. His *Remarks on Insanity* were edited by his son Thomas in 1817. (8) Martin Wall, Fellow of New College, physician to Radcliffe Infirmary and later Lord Litchfield Professor of Clinical Medicine, and Pargeter's other sponsor for the M.D., became President on 9 November 1781. (9) Lloyd (unidentified) and (10)

* This Society was briefly noticed by Mr. Finlayson in his 'Records of medical and scientific societies in Scotland', *The Bibliothek*, 1958, 1, 14–19.

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Thomas Meredith, both of Jesus, joined 11 November 1782; (11) William Thomson of Christ Church on 19 February 1783; and (12) John Henderson of Pembroke on 23 March 1783.

The first session lasted from 1 December 1780 to 30 March 1781. Eighteen meetings were held and at each a paper was read. Unfortunately, they were recorded by title only throughout the Minutes. Sibthorp gave the first two papers: on the quartan, and on the different species of worms found in the human body and the most approved anthelmintics; later in the same session he read two other papers, on the connection of botany with medicine, and on poisonous plants. Latham read papers on rheumatism, smallpox and gout; Nicholson on fluor albus, angina maligna, and hypochondria; Bernard on disorders of bile, the medicinal virtues of factitious air, and semeiology; Austin on dropsy; Mayo on pulmonary complaints; and Pargeter three papers on gonorrhoea, lues venerea, and chlorosis.

For the second session which opened on 9 November 1781 Wall was elected President and Mayo Secretary. Six meetings only are recorded between 9 November and 14 December after which appears the entry: 'NB. No Minutes of the Society appear for the Remainder of this Session'. Austin read a paper on diuretics; Bernard on diseases of children; Pargeter on the cure of venereal disease; Latham on ophthalmia; and Mayo on haemoptysis.

The third and final session opened on 5 November 1782 with Wall continuing as President and Nicolson again acting as Secretary. Meetings were held regularly until 9 December and papers were read by Austin 'on the impossibility of the transmutation of metals'; Nicolson on icterus; Mayo on dysentery; Lloyd on influenza; and Meredith on puerperal fever. Then came a gap until meetings were resumed on 19 February 1783 with a paper by Nicolson on tea, coffee and chocolate; 12 March Thomson spoke on apoplexy; and on 16 March Austin 'on the effects of opium when applied externally'. The rest of this meeting was taken up by discussion of alterations of the Society's rules proposed by Thomson, who also presented catalogues of the medical books 'in the College Library at Edinburgh' with supplement, and of the library of the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh with MS. additions. On 23 March which was fated to be the last clinical meeting, Austin's paper on opium was discussed and Pargeter read 'the heads of a paper on the smallpox'. The rest of the meeting was devoted to Thomson's motions and the Society met to continue discussing them the next day.

The last recorded meeting of the Society took place on 31 March 1783 with Austin back in the presidential chair. 'No paper being provided for discussion through Mr. Pargeter's absence', the session was devoted to debating further amendments of the Society's rules. These take up the remaining ten pages of the Minute Book.

The Society seems to have petered out when its senior and most active members like Sibthorp, Austin and Pargeter left Oxford, despite Thomson's efforts to put it on a new and wider basis. But if he was unsuccessful in this, the Minute Book owes its survival to him since he was doubtless the Thomson who carried it off, and from whose library it finally reached Edinburgh.

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