

DONALD MONRO (1727–1802)

The following letter was received by the Editor from Dr. R. E. Wright-St. Clair of Hamilton, New Zealand, dated 1 October 1970.

'May I refer to one minor error in the excellent paper, *Henry Marshall (1775–1851) and the Health of the British Army* by Professor R. L. Blanco published in your July 1970 number, pp. 260–76. Among 'earlier army sanitarians', on p.274 Professor Blanco mentions 'Donald Munro (1727–1802)'.

'This was actually Donald *Monro*, born in Edinburgh, 15 January 1727/28, died in London, 9 June 1802. He was the second son of Professor Alexander Monro *primus* of Edinburgh and older brother of Professor Alexander Monro *secundus*. Donald Monro graduated M.D. at Edinburgh on 8 June 1753 with a thesis, *De Hydrope*, later enlarged and published in English as *An Essay on the Dropsy and its Different Species* (London, 1756). On 12 April 1756 he was admitted a licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians of London. The fellowship of that College was usually reserved for graduates of Oxford or Cambridge but on 30 September 1771 Monro was elected a Fellow, *speciali gratia*. He was a Censor of the College in 1772, 1781, 1785, and 1789, while from 1788 until his death he was an Elect. He was the Croonian lecturer in 1774 and 1775 and also the Harveian lecturer in 1775. From 1758 until his retirement in 1786 because of ill health, Monro was a physician to St. George's Hospital, London. He also conducted a successful private practice from his home in Jermyn Street and in 1766 was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.

'Donald Monro's military service began on 3 December 1760 during the Seven Years' War, when he was commissioned as physician to the British military hospital in Germany. In March 1763, at the end of the war, he returned to England with the rank of physician-general and went on to half pay, resuming his duties at St. George's. On 27 June 1778, after the outbreak of the American War of Independence, Monro reverted to full pay and served each summer for several years in various military camps in Britain. At the time of his death he was the senior physician to the forces. His fame in the history of military medicine and hygiene rests on two works. The first was *An Account of the Diseases which were most frequent in the British Military Hospitals in Germany, from January 1761, till the return of the Troops to England in March 1763: to which is added, An Essay on the Means of Preserving the Health of Soldiers, and Conducting Military Hospitals* (London, 1764). Monro's second book on army hygiene was a revised and expanded version of the first, published under the title, *Observations on the Means of Preserving the Health of Soldiers, and of Conducting Military Hospitals; on the Diseases incident to Soldiers in the time of Service; and of the same Diseases, as they have appeared in London* (2 volumes, London, 1780). Both these works were dedicated to King George III.

'Other books by Monro were on the composition and medicinal uses of various spa waters (*A Treatise on Mineral Waters*, 2 volumes, London, 1770) and on Chemistry (*A Treatise on Medical and Pharmaceutical Chymistry, and the Materia Medica*, 4 volumes, London, 1788). His other claim to fame was that he was one of the first to relate dropsy to valvular disease of the heart in a case which he examined post mortem

while a student and described in his *Essay on the Dropsy* (p. 17):

In the Year 1750 I dissected the Body of a Man who died of an Universal Dropsy, in the presence of Dr. John Rutherford, Professor of Medicine in the University of Edinburgh: we could find no other Cause of the Disease than the Ossification of the Valvulae Mitrales in the Left Ventricle of the Heart, by which the Orifice of that Ventricle was so straitened, that I could scarce force my little Finger into it. The Heart itself was very large. While the Man was alive, all the soft parts of the Neck were raised by every Systole of the Heart, in such a Manner that the Veins there seemed to have a pulsation.

'Monro was a contemporary of John Hunter on the staff of St. George's Hospital and a near neighbour of Hunter's in Jermyn Street. No portrait of Monro is known'.

OBITUARY

W. S. C. COPEMAN, C.B.E., T.D., M.A., M.D., F.R.C.P. (1900–1970)

It is with great regret that we report the death on 24 November 1970 of Dr. W. S. C. Copeman, a member of the Editorial Board of *Medical History*, Chairman of the Faculty of the History of Medicine and Pharmacy in the Society of Apothecaries since its foundation in 1959, and immediate past-president of the British Society for the History of Medicine.

Tribute has already been paid elsewhere to his distinguished career as a rheumatologist of international renown. He was president of the Arthritis and Rheumatism Council, which owes a great deal to his energy and determination, of the European League against Rheumatism, and of the Heberden Society, of which he was one of the founders. The Society's library, now housed in the Royal College of Physicians, of which he was a vice-president, is largely his creation and reflects his keen interest in the history of rheumatic disorders.

Copeman's interest in the history of medicine sprang from his own sense of tradition, family, professional and national, and a strong loyalty to all the institutions with which he was connected. It was he who, during his term of office as Master of the Society of Apothecaries, first conceived the idea of the Faculty and so found a new and singularly appropriate role for that ancient society which had contributed so much to British medical practice in the past. He helped to assure its permanence by bringing to its establishment all his wide experience and considerable social flair in order to place it on a sound financial basis.

Despite his very busy career as a consultant, as editor of *Annals of Rheumatic Diseases*, and author of the well-known *Textbook of Rheumatic Diseases* (now in its fourth edition), he yet found time to develop his dual role as medical historian. His Fitzpatrick Lectures at the Royal College of Physicians provided the basis for his successful book *Doctors and Diseases in Tudor Times* (1960), just as his *History of Gout and Rheumatic Diseases* grew out of lectures which he gave in the University of California at Los Angeles. He also published many scholarly papers on historical topics, and this contribution to the subject was recognized by his election to the fellowship of the International Academy of the History of Medicine.

His support, his wise counsel, and his genial company will be sadly missed by his many friends, whose sympathy goes out to his devoted wife and family in their sad loss.

F.N.L.P.