

CENTENARIES

Cockburn, William (1669–1739)

WILLIAM COCKBURN, a British physician, was born in 1669. After taking his M.A. at Edinburgh, he proceeded to the University of Leyden of which he became an M.D. In 1694 he was appointed naval physician and he seems to have retained this position till 1731, when he joined the staff of the Greenwich Hospital. Cockburn was physician to Jonathan Swift.

REMEDY FOR DYSENTERY

Cockburn had a secret remedy for dysentery. In July 1696, when he was dining on board one of the ships, Lord Berkeley remarked that "there was nothing farther wanting but a better method of curing fluxes". Cockburn announced his secret remedy which when tried next day upon seventy sailors proved a brilliant success. The result was reported to the Admiralty Board and the remedy immediately came into official use and remained so for forty years, not only in the navy, but also in the army. This was looked upon as a benefit of national importance and William III personally conveyed the nation's thanks to him, although he was bitterly opposed as a quack by academical physicians. Nothing is now known of that wonderful remedy.

HIS WRITINGS

Cockburn was a writer of some importance. His only contribution to the *Philosophical transactions* of the Royal Society was on "The operation of a blister". Its object was "To give a reasonable conjecture how a blistering plaister, the chief ingredient of which is cantherides, may cure a fever, and its most terrible symptom, a delirium, and that in a few hours".

HIS WRITINGS

His first book was on the *Nature and cure of distempers of seafaring people with observations on the diet of seamen's in H.M.'s navy* (1696). In those days there was no notion of the importance of succulent vegetables in this matter; hence Cockburn's sarcastic remark that people "at the name of scurvy, fly to scurvy-grass, water-cresses and horse-radishes". His other books were on the *Lues venerea* and on the *Symptoms, nature and cure of gonorrhœa*. The latter went through four editions and was translated into other languages.

Cockburn died at London November 1739.

Hewson, William (1739–1774)

WILLIAM HEWSON, a British anatomist, was born at Hexham, Northumberland, November 14, 1739. Having been apprenticed to his father who was a surgeon, he studied at St. Thomas's and Guy's hospitals and attended the anatomical lectures of William Hunter. Later he became a partner of Hunter in his anatomical school. But the partnership broke and in September 1772 Hewson began to

lecture independently at a theatre which he built near his house. His reputation was so high that he had no difficulty in attracting a large class.

HIS RESEARCHES

Hewson's researches on the blood were of great importance as establishing the essential character of the process of coagulation and the forms of red corpuscles in different animals. He also made valuable contributions to the study of the lymphatic system in fishes.

HIS PUBLICATIONS

Hewson's first book came out in 1771 under the title *An experimental enquiry into the properties of the blood*. He wrote two more books, one on the lymphatic system and the other on the red corpuscles. Besides these he wrote about ten papers, most of which were published in the *Philosophical transactions* of the Royal Society. His *Opera omnia* was published in Leyden in 1795, while an English edition of his *Collected works* was brought out by the Sydenham Society in 1846.

HIS END

Hewson wounded himself while making a dissection and serious symptoms followed. He died after a few days' illness May 1, 1774.

Murdock, William (1754–1839)

WILLIAM MURDOCK, a British engineer, was born at Bellow Mill, Ayrshire, August 21, 1754. Brought up as a gunner—his father and grandfather were so—he entered the service of Boulton and Watt at Soho in 1777. Murdock's unambitious career was entirely devoted to the interests of his employers. He had no leisure to devote to any sort of recreation. The rising sun often found him after a night passed in incessant labour still at the anvil or turning lathe, for with his own hands he would make those articles he would not trust to unskilful ones.

THE FIRST LOCOMOTIVE

His fame had been somewhat overshadowed by the great name of Watt. But the first locomotive was made by Murdock. It was constructed entirely by his own hands. One night, after returning from his duties, he wished to put to the test the power of his engine, and as rail roads were then unknown, he started the locomotive in a dark night on a narrow path in the church compound, himself in full chase after it. Shortly after, he heard a distant despair-like shouting; he soon found that the cries for assistance proceeded from the pastor of the church who, going into the town on business, was met in this lonely road by the fiery monster, whom he subsequently declared he took to be the Evil one in *propria persona*.

THE FIRST COAL GAS LIGHT

Murdock is still better known to the public and most deservedly so, by his invention of