

THE NOSE IN LITERATURE.

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It is partly in order to draw attention to the writings of an English colleague, dead these many years, that I venture to lay the following lines before the medical public. By chance I picked up some time ago a book, now, as I suppose, only little known, the "Illustrations of Sterne," by John Ferriar, M.D. He evidently was, as so many of the profession have been, a hunter of curiosities and as I have worked a little in the nose and throat line his collection of quaint quotations concerning the nose appealed very much to me. Once my interest being stirred I made further researches in the same direction, some of which are reproduced in the following lines. I hope the reader will not find them too tedious.

Perhaps there has never existed a man who has written of the nose in more laudatory terms than the Bologna surgeon Tagliacozzi. In his "Cheirurgia nova," where he describes the Italian rhinoplastic operation, is to be found a very entertaining chapter with the heading, "De narium dignitate," in which he expresses himself in the following manner¹: "Nares igitur, ut earum dignitatem consideremus, quantum pulchritudini splendoris afferant, id satis explicari non potest. Quamvis enim cuique faciei partium suus honor, sua gratia adsit, quae suavi rythmo disposita, in augustissimam formae speciem conspirent, peculiaris tamen nasi ratio est, ut concinnus si fuerit, summopere faciem commendet; distortus vero, aut pravus aut sinus aut vulnere notatus totam formae honestatem evertat." And in another place: "Inest praeterea naso nescio quid augustum et regium; an quia forma corporis et animae decoris index sit: an quia peculiaris quaedam imperandi dexteritas et prudentia in eo eniteat."

In order to show how essential the nose is in making a figure beautiful or ugly Tagliacozzi brings forth the two following historical incidents. In the first a somewhat uncanny part is played by a Byzantine courtier, "qui abreptæ ab Roberto filio Petri Antisiodoriensis nares sponsæ praecidit, ut qua causa allectus fuerat Robertus ad sponsæ raptum, eadem spoliatus graves aculeos doloris persentisceret." This really appears to have occurred, though the quaint stating of the motive must be answered for by Tagliacozzi himself alone.² About the historical truth of the next narrative, however, I feel happy to be able to entertain some doubt, as otherwise it would form a rather heavy item on the bill run up in former times in England by some of my ancestors. "Sic sancta Eba, regii sanguinis Angla, Colymbaniensis monasterii praeses, ut funestam irruentium Danorum libidinem a corpore suo averteret, una cum caeteris religiosae illius vitae comitibus nares sibi obtruncavit, quo vulnere, non tam indecoro quam honesto, castitatem Deo promissam casta foemina redemit."³ Modern historians at least⁴ refuse to believe in this. Whether the French nuns, who according to Hovorka⁵ on a similar occasion also cut off their noses, really have done so I do not know, having been unable to find his authority. If they have done it they probably have brought about what they wished for, for, as Tagliacozzi says: "Narium apice abscisso panduntur sinus et partium internarum recessus, vasti patent hiatus et cavernae, instar antri Tryphonii⁶ obscurae; horrendum certe et abominandum aspicientibus spectaculum."

As an additional reason why the nose should be honoured Tagliacozzi mentions that it forms a sign of recognition and proves this by a quotation from Virgil. He might as proof have chosen the following story from a remarkable book then very much in vogue—viz, Henri Estienne's "Apologie pour Hérode." ⁷ Dramatis personæ

are: "Un seigneur de Bourges nommé Boyuerd," and several witnesses bribed to give evidence against him in a case of murder; these latter, however did not remember their lesson correctly: "Car au lieu que pour une des meilleures marques pour reconnoistre ledict Boyuerd, on leur avoit dict qu'il avoit un nez faict à manche de rasoir, interrogez separément par le président à quoy ils le reconnoistroient, respondirent tous d'un mesme accord qu'ils le pourroyent reconnoistre aisément à un coup de rasoir qu'il avoit eu sur le nez. Tellement que leur estant confronté ledict Boyuerd contre lequel ils entendoient déposer, dirent que ce n'estoit pas cestuy-la, pource qu'il n'avoit point de cicatrice sur le nez et ainsi estans decouverts, furent pendus: et le subornateur et faux accusateur fut decapité, et mis en quatre quartiers: mais en effigie: qui fut un grand avantage pour sa personne."

How far back the prepossession against mis-shapen noses dates is demonstrated by the Levitical law that excludes from the office of priest those endowed "vel parvo, vel grandi, et torto naso."⁸ However, more quaint notions about noses have been ascribed to the Jews than really ought to be. So Ferriar⁹ has (after Camerarius¹⁰) the following quotation: "Atque hoc quidem epitheton inter caetera Deus sibi arrogat [Exodus xxxiv.], qui Mosen alloquens proprietatibus decem hanc adjicit (.....¹¹), id est magno naso, ut Hispanica editio Complutensis et recentior Antverpiensis ad verbum exprimunt et aliis quae Bibliarum locis Deus ita vocatur quod omnes interpretes exponunt patientem, &c." This is an example of that most detestable sort of curiosities, I mean the spurious. For first, I have the statement of learned Judaists that the words in Hebrew are quite incorrectly quoted and that the genuine text means, "long as to the nostrils," i.e., a being that waits a long time before it sniffs for scorn, ergo, patient; and secondly, neither the Editio Complutensis of 1514-17 nor the Antwerp edition (Plantin 1569-73) has any other translation than the usual.

As it is well known, the Romans have given name to a certain form of aquiline noses. Nevertheless, one finds that they did not think crooked noses beautiful. So Clitipho mentions the bride offered him by his mother in the following uncomplimentary terms¹²:

"Rufamne illam virginem
Cæsiam, sparso ore, adunco naso? Non possum, pater."

Nor did they like long noses; see, for instance, the catalogue of a Roman matron's attractions and defects¹³:

"O crus, O brachia! Verum
Depygis, nasuta, brevi latere ac pede longo est."

Generally speaking, the nose played a very great, and to us sometimes strange, part in the language of the Rome of antiquity. It is, for instance, intended as a great praise when Horace says about the poet Lucilius that he was possessed of a well-blown nose¹⁴:

"Facetus,
Emunctæ naris, durus componere versus."

The word long-nosed (nasutus), nay, nasus itself, stands for acumen and criticism. Perhaps this may be accounted for as notions produced by a popular doctrine of physiognomics. This science has from antiquity down even to our days had its fervent votaries, but presumably none more persuaded than Lavater. It is nearly incredible what he is able to read out of a physiognomy. So by the discussion of Benjamin West's profile he expresses himself literally as follows:¹⁵ "Bis zum Nasenloche geht der reinste Ausdruck von Geist—Er sinkt schon, erlöschet schon ein wenig unter der Nase; nicht dasz der Umrisz unedel werde; aber er sinkt von Grösze gegen Mittelmässigkeit herab." His enthusiasm induces him in another place,¹⁶ where he has given a description of the nose *comme il faut*, to declare: "So eine Nase—ist mehr werth als ein Königreich." I wonder only how he would have valued a nose like that of Pamphagus¹ that might be used as an extinguisher, a pair of bellows,

⁸ Vulgate, Leviticus xxxi.

⁹ Illustrations of Sterne, London, 1798.

¹⁰ Ph. Camerarius: Opera horarum subsecivarum, Francofurt 1644, Centuria prima, p. 253.

¹¹ Here some Hebrew characters.

¹² Terentius: Heanton Timorum, v., 5, 17-18.

¹³ Horatius: Satiræ, Lib. i., 92-93.

¹⁴ Horatius: Satiræ, Lib. i., 4, 7-8.

¹⁵ Joh. C. Lavater: Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe. Leipzig und Winterthur, 1775-78. Dritte Versuch, S. 180.

¹⁶ Loc. cit., Vierte Versuch, S. 257.

¹⁷ Desid. Erasmi Roterodami: Colloquia Familiaria. Roterod., 1693, p. 22.

¹ Gasparus Taliacotius: Cheirurgia nova, &c. Francofurti, 1598. Caput quintum, p. 77.

² Joann. Baptista Egnatius, the authority of Tagliacozzi, only mentions the tragic event in very short terms (De Caesaribus, lib. iii.; Venetis, 1516, lib. ii., Robertus fil.).

³ See most of this in Matthæus Westmonasteriensis Flores Historiarum, &c., Francofurti, 1601, p. 161.

⁴ For instance, the Rev. W. Hunt, D. Litt., President of the Royal Historical Society, in Dictionary of National Biography, vol. xvi., London, 1888, p. 342.

⁵ O. Hovorka: Die äussere Nase, Wien, 1893, S. 6.

⁶ Qu. Trophonii.

⁷ The edition of La Haye, 1735, tome i., p. 379.

boarding-pike, a trumpet, a pick-axe, a scythe, an anchor, a fork, or a fishing-hook.

But it was not only Lavater's eyes that possessed such singular discerning powers, also his nose appears to have been unique.¹⁸ "Ich glaube, dass ein feiner Geruch die Nationen riechen—und vielleicht eher unterscheiden könnte, als das Gesicht. (Mein Geruch) ist fein genug, das Daseyn oder Naheseyn gewisser Krankheiten zu bemerken, und wenn ich in gewisse leere Zimmer eintrete, so kann ich manchmal mit Zuversicht sagen: 'Hier muss ein Hektikus oder Maniakus, oder einer, der im Begriff ist es zu werden, gewesen seyn.' Und zwar waren mehrmals solche da gewesen, an deren Gesichte sich die Krankheit noch nicht zeigte. So kam mir einmal ein gewisser Geruch mit dem Besuch eines Fremden in mein Zimmer, den ich natürlicher Weise für ganz individuell hielt und weiter nicht achtete. Mehr als ein halb Jahr lang hernach kam mir derselbe Geruch, von dem ich ein halb Jahr lang keine Spur mehr hatte, so wie ich vorher keine davon gehabt hatte, wieder mit einem Fremden in mein Zimmer. Bald vernahm ich, dass dieser aus derselben Gegend kam. Ich musste also sogleich auf den Gedanken fallen, dass es Nationalgerüche geben könnte."

One scarcely knows whether the author wishes assertions of this kind to be taken seriously or not. This doubt does not exist when we direct our attention to the following jocosities as to the etiology of certain malformations of the nose. One of these theories is quoted by Ferriar¹⁹ out of Bouchet's "Serées": "Ceste chaleur fait aussi, adjousta-il encores, que les Mores sont fort camus, et diriez qu'on leur a coupé le nez sur le billot: cela procédant de la grande chaleur, qui ne permet pas que les os et les cartilages croissent beaucoup, comme venans d'une matière inutile et vacante: les petits enfans le confirment bien, lesquels estans chauds sont camus, ayans en leur jeunesse le nez fort court."

Another very widely spread theory is the one first, as far as I know, mentioned by Rabelais²⁰: "Pourquoy, dist Gargantua, est ce que Frère Jean a si beau nez? Trut avant, dist le Moine. Selon vraye philosophie monastique, c'est parce que ma nourrice avait les tetins moletz; en la laictant mon nez y enfondroit comme en beurre, et là s'eslevoit et croissoit comme la paste dedans la met. Les durs tetins de nourrices font les enfans camuz." This idea Sterne has eagerly taken up and developed.²¹ "Now Ambrose Paræus convinced my father that the length and the goodness of the nose was owing simply to the softness and flaccidity in the nurse's breast, as the flatness and shortness of *puisne* noses was to the firmness and elastic repulsion of the same organ of nutrition in the hale and lively, which though happy for the woman, was the undoing of the child, inasmuch as his nose was so snubbed, so rebuffed, so rebated, and so refrigerated thereby, as never to arrive *ad mensuram suam legitimam*; but that in case of the flaccidity and softness of the nurse's or mother's breast, by sinking into it, as into as much butter, the nose was comforted, nourished, plumped up, refreshed, refocillated, and set a-growing for ever." Sterne here quotes Ambroise Paré as his authority. Remembering the coolness with which Sterne has ascribed a grand folio, "De Nasis," to a never before or since heard of author, the great and learned Hafen Slawkembergus, one might feel tempted to think that also his assertion about Ambroise Paré was a hoax. But the great French surgeon really has written something of a similar kind and, as is clearly to be seen, in full earnest. In the chapter Des Mammelles et de la Poitrine de la Nourrice he says:²² "Elle doit avoir la poitrine large et les mammelles assez grosses, et non lasches et pendantes, moyennes entre dures et molles. D'abondant l'enfant imprime le bout de son nez à la mamelle: la trouvant trop dure se fâche, et ne veut téter, et quelquefois en devient camus."

In order not to become too tedious I am going to stop here. The most appropriate way of finishing I can think of is by quoting the well known lines:²³

"Nasutus sis usque licet, sis denique nasus
Quantum noluerat ferre rogatus Atlans,
Et possis ipsum tu deridere Latinum,
Non potes in nugis dicere plura meas,
Ipse ego quam dixi."

¹⁸ Loc. cit., Vierte Versuch, S. 268 (in the note).

¹⁹ John Ferriar, M.D.: Illustrations of Sterne, London, 1798, p. 113.

²⁰ La Vie très Horrificque du Grand Gargantua, chap. 40.

²¹ Tristram Shandy, Book iii., chap. xxxviii.

²² Les Œuvres d'Ambroise Paré, Lyon, 1623, p. 705.

²³ Martial: Epigramm., xiii., 2, 1-5.

THE DECLINING BIRTH-RATE AND FERTILITY OF MARRIAGE IN ENGLAND.

Two able papers on this important subject were read before the Royal Statistical Society on Dec. 19th, 1905; one jointly by Dr. Arthur Newsholme, medical officer of health of Brighton, and Dr. T. H. C. Stevenson, assistant medical officer to the Education Committee of the London County Council; and the other by Mr. G. Udny Yule, Newmarch Lecturer in Statistics, University College, London. The discussion on these papers was postponed and continued after the delivery of the President's address at the subsequent meeting of the society on Jan. 16th. Both these papers naturally treated the subject mainly from a statistical standpoint, with a view to analyse and if possible to explain the extent and true purport of recent changes in English marriage-rates and birth-rates. A careful study of these papers enforces two important and useful conclusions. In the first place that the crude birth-rate—that is, the proportion of registered births to population, unless duly corrected for the age-distribution of the population, very considerably understates the recent marked decline of the true birth-rate. The recent decline in the birth-rate has indeed caused a marked change in the age-constitution of the English population. The important bearing of varying age-distribution in different populations on marriage-rates, birth-rates, and death-rates has been urged by successive statistical superintendents at the General Register Office, and it is satisfactory to find that this fact is now very generally recognised by students of vital statistics. The second unavoidable conclusion to be deduced from these papers is that the recent steady decline of under-age marriages, and the somewhat general increase of age at marriage, causing a decreased proportion of young married women in the English population, accounts but for a very small part of the decline in the birth-rate.

Both papers, moreover, abundantly prove the existence of a marked and increasing decline in the birth-rate and in the fertility of marriage, that is in the proportion of births to a marriage. Dr. Newsholme's paper shows that the corrected birth-rate in England and Wales, which was 35.4 per 1000 in 1871, declined successively to 34.7 in 1881, 32.6 in 1891, and 28.4 in 1901, implying a startling increase in the rate of decline of fertility. With regard to what Dr. Newsholme and Dr. Stevenson style "social *felo-de-se*" it seems to be next to impossible to avoid the conclusion at which their investigation has led them. At the same time, however, it is well not to shut one's eyes to the fact that mathematical and statistical methods, even when handled as ably as they are in the two papers under consideration, are scarcely fitted to solve the problem of the true cause of this decreased and declining fertility of marriage in England.

There are many pessimists at the present time who, in the face of much cogent evidence to the contrary, persistently assert that the British nation is suffering from progressive physical deterioration. This assertion may, however, be true and if so it may quite possibly be the fact that this decline of fertility is, at any rate in part, one of the results of this physical deterioration. Careful study of these two papers and of the remarkable New South Wales report on the similar decline of fertility in that colony would, however, more probably lead to the conclusion that the true cause of this decline of fertility, here and elsewhere, is a serious decrease of moral stamina rather than the alleged increase of physical degeneration.

Mr. Yule's theory that economic factors are the main causes of fluctuations in marriage-rates and birth rates is more interesting than convincing. He states that having mathematically examined several individual factors in succession he finds that the movement of prices "is the only one that fulfils certain conditions which must hold good for the predominant cause of the changes in the marriage rate (if there be any single predominant cause) and that it does fulfil them fairly closely." As regards the marriage rate, Mr. Yule's figures appear to show that it rises with an increase in prices and also declines when they fall. That high prices should promote marriage seems paradoxical but high prices probably imply high wages and full employment and Mr. Yule's tables certainly support his theory.