

## HISTORY

I particularly enjoyed the historical papers in the most recent issue of the *College Journal*. Professor Donaldson's contribution on *Andrae Vesalii Bruxellensis* (Donaldson IML. *Andrae Vesalii Bruxellensis Icones anatomicae. Part I. J R Coll Physicians Edinb* 2012; 42:184–6) was superb and I look forward very much to reading the second part.

The article on AJ Cronin (O'Mahony S. AJ Cronin and *The Citadel*: did a work of fiction contribute to the foundation of the NHS? *J R Coll Physicians Edinb* 2012; 42:172–8) reminded me how much I enjoyed *Hatter's Castle* and *The Citadel* when they came on the market. Like so many of my generation I subsequently became an avid follower of *Dr Finlay's Casebook*. At the time of the publication of *The Citadel*, my father was a single-handed GP and the concept of a National Health Service was being debated. As a schoolboy I was closely aware that the struggles he endured were similar to those of Cronin's heroes.

As an academic pathologist *Hatter's Castle* raised for me the possibility that James Brodie's aggressive behavior might have been triggered by mercury poisoning through excessive contact with this element in the process of manufacturing hats.

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I read with great interest the paper by Dr Seamus O'Mahony (June 2012) and admired the care with which the author described the life and times of AJ Cronin.

I came to know his son Patrick Cronin when I tutored him in preparation for the MRCP, which in those days was essential for appointment to house jobs in several specialist London hospitals. Patrick became house physician at Hammersmith Hospital to Professor Sir John McMichael, who was known to remark that he would need to be careful about what he said on ward rounds lest he found himself in one of Cronin's books! I proposed the name of Patrick Cronin and that of his father AJ Cronin MRCP for advancement to Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians of London. The proposal for Patrick Cronin was accepted but Sir Kenneth Robson, then secretary of the RCP, wrote to me to say that AJ Cronin's name was not acceptable for Fellowship because he had not been in clinical practice. When I think of how many people without any claim to medical practice have been appointed Fellows of the Royal College of Physicians in latter years...

*The Citadel* raised controversy. Cronin's use of the word 'tabloid' angered Burroughs-Wellcome who had patented the term as its registered trademark. After an exchange of charges 'tabloid' was excluded from subsequent impressions of *The Citadel*. Cronin's description of practice in Harley Street offended Sir Adolphe Abrahams, which led to an exchange of letters. I chanced to see the correspondence from both Burroughs-Wellcome and Sir Adolphe Abrahams in the Cronin house, Baugy sur Clarens near Montreux in Switzerland where I was a frequent houseguest of Patrick Cronin, who became a dear friend over many years. On one occasion when staying in Canada with Patrick Cronin, at the time Dean of Medicine at McGill University, we visited his mother who had Alzheimer's disease and had been admitted into care. She had not lost her Scottish accent. Patrick Cronin did tell me that Nan, the Cronin's nanny, had remained a companion to his father to the very end.

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## THE RICHMONDS IN KHARTOUM

In 1966 I joined the Department of Medicine in the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary as a postgraduate student preparing for the MRCP. I was taken under the wing of Dr John Richmond. In later years I had the pleasure of inviting Professor John Richmond as external examiner to the Department of Medicine. As usual he signed the visitors' book kept in the Kitchener desk in the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Medicine, formerly the Kitchener School of Medicine (KSM).

Some five years ago I met another Richmond in Khartoum, this time acting as external examiner in obstetrics and gynaecology for the Sudan Medical Specialization Board. I asked whether he was related to Professor John Richmond. To my surprise I discovered he was his son. I took him to the Dean's Office to sign the visitors' book as usual. He turned a few pages backwards and there he could see the signature of Professor John Richmond.

Tony Toft's note (Toft T. Professor John Richmond (1926–2008). *J R Coll Physicians Edinb* 2012; 42:91. reminded me of the long and outstanding contribution of British medicine (especially from Edinburgh) to medical education in the Sudan.

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