

## **Subcutaneous tenotomy : biographical notes / by A.B. Judson.**

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SUBCUTANEOUS TENOTOMY.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

BY

A. B. JUDSON, M.D.,  
NEW YORK.

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*From the Transactions of  
The American Orthopedic Association.  
1899.*





## SUBCUTANEOUS TENOTOMY.

### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

BY A. B. JUDSON, M.D.,  
NEW YORK.

IN 1876, Dr. Louis Stromeyer (1804–1876) reached the fiftieth anniversary of his graduation in medicine at Berlin. The event was celebrated at Hanover. Mr. William MacCormac read the British address, which contained the following words: "Your discovery of a safe method of subcutaneous surgery forms an epoch in the history of our art"; and Dr. Little "made some remarks, thanking Stromeyer for having consented to sit for a marble bust,"<sup>1</sup> which was presented to the college at London, where it stands "among those of the most eminent British surgeons."<sup>2</sup> "Stromeyer denominated Dr. Little as the Apostle of Tenotomy, and ascribed to the visit paid him by Dr. Little the rapid diffusion of a knowledge of its happy results in Germany, France, and the United States."<sup>3</sup> "Never was any great operation, involving a vital principle of surgery, spread in less time over the globe, and with less resistance, than tenotomy."<sup>4</sup>

In 1829, at Hanover, Dr. Stromeyer "established a private orthopedic institution, and here, in February, 1831, he made his first section of the Achilles tendon. The operation marks the beginning of the whole system of subcutaneous surgery and, it may fairly be said, of all really successful orthopedic treatment."<sup>5</sup>

In 1836,<sup>6</sup> our late honorary member, Dr. William John Little

<sup>1</sup> Medical Times and Gazette, London, April 22, 1876, p. 450.

<sup>2</sup> Proceedings of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, London, 1877, vol. viii. pp. 179–182.

<sup>3</sup> Lancet, January 7, 1854, pp. 19–20.

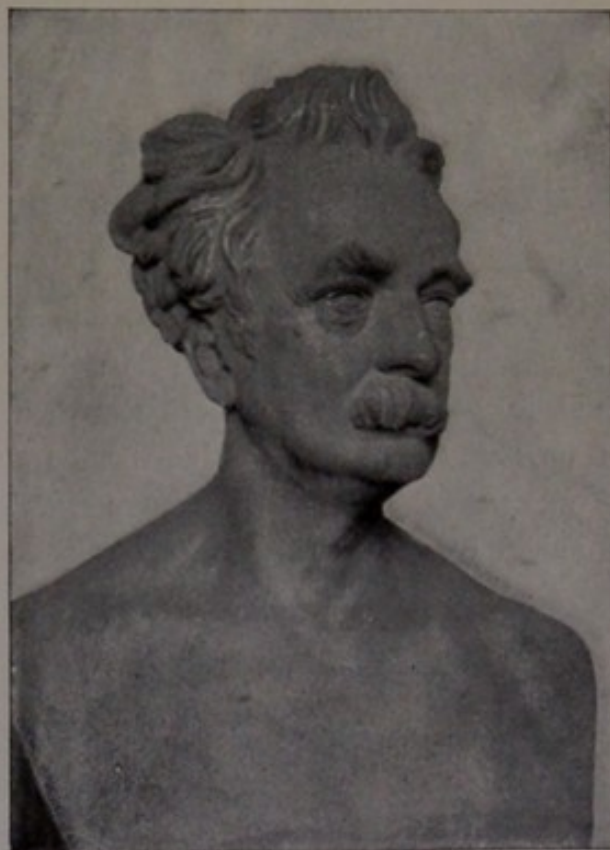
<sup>4</sup> Association Medical Journal, London, June, 29, 1855; new series, vol. iii. p. 603.

<sup>5</sup> Proceedings of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, London, 1877, vol. viii. pp. 179–182.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

(1810–1894), visited Dr. Stromeyer at Hanover and—“unknown to his nearest friends in London, who would, he feared, have tried to prevent him had they known of his intention,”<sup>1</sup> and disregarding

FIG. 1.



*Stromeyer*

the advice of many surgeons, of whom “none gave him help or hope”<sup>2</sup>—submitted himself to subcutaneous tenotomy for the relief of talipes equino-varus of the left foot,<sup>3</sup> “in which the sole was turned toward the opposite ankle,”<sup>4</sup> the result of an attack of infan-

<sup>1</sup> Lancet, July 21, 1894, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> Proceedings of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, London, 1877, vol. viii. pp. 179–182.

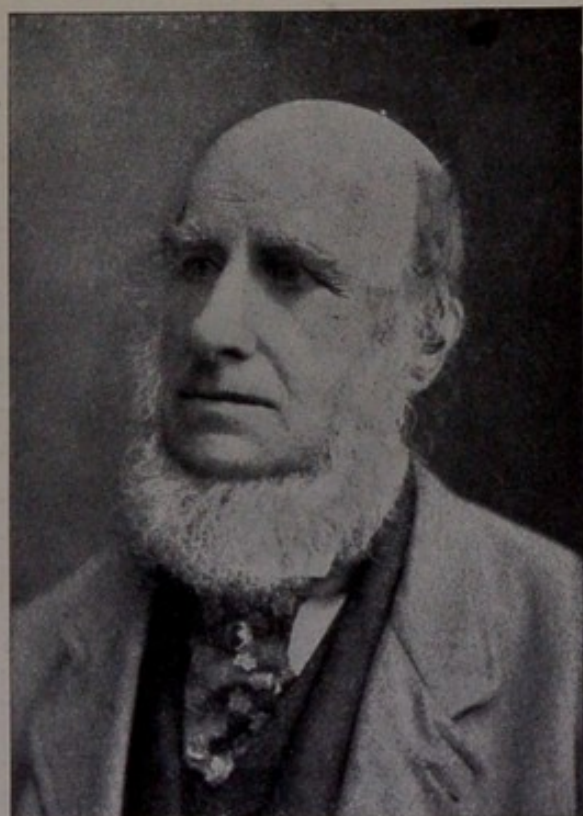
<sup>3</sup> Lancet, July 21, 1894, p. 168.

<sup>4</sup> British Annals of Medicine, April, 1837; American Journal of the Medical Sciences, August, 1837, vol. xx. p. 513.



tile paralysis at the age of four years.<sup>1</sup> Up to the time of the operation he had worn instruments, "but could not walk many yards without pain." The result of the treatment at Hanover was satisfactory, and he was enabled to "walk twelve miles with pleasure."<sup>2</sup> "The benefit which he had received at the hands of Stromeyer laid

FIG. 2.



*A. B. Judson.*

him under a deep obligation, both to that surgeon and to society at large, to devote his energies to the extension of the knowledge of tenotomy among the other scientific men of the day."<sup>3</sup> In Berlin "his emphatic testimony to the success of Stromeyer's practice and the silent evidence of his own once deformed but now nearly corrected

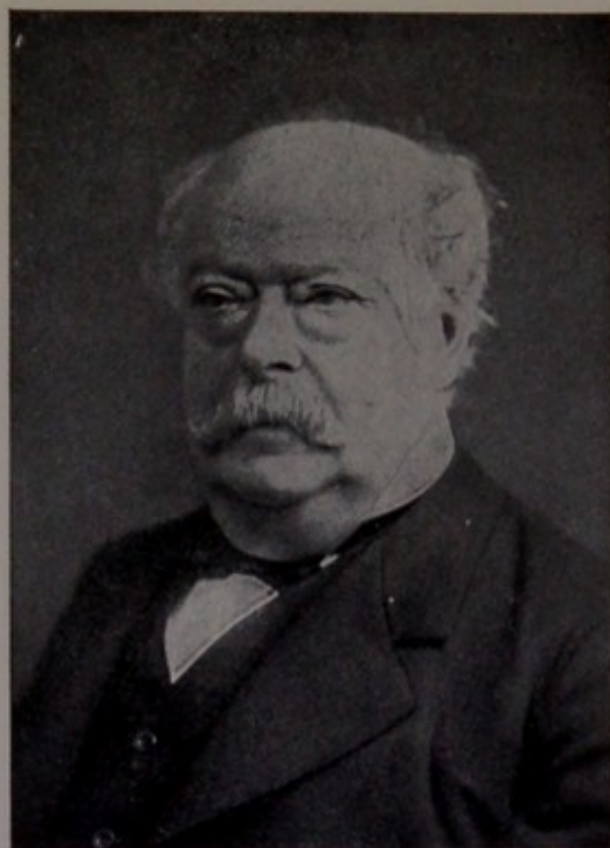
<sup>1</sup> TRANSACTIONS OF THE AMERICAN ORTHOPEDIC ASSOCIATION, 1894, vol. vii. p. 335.

<sup>2</sup> British Annals of Medicine, April, 1837; American Journal of the Medical Sciences, August, 1837, vol. xx. p. 513.

<sup>3</sup> Lancet, January 7, 1854, pp. 19, 20.

foot caused a revulsion of feeling in favor of subcutaneous tenotomy,"<sup>1</sup> a method which was not practised in England until he performed the operation in London, February 20, 1837.<sup>2</sup> In 1839 "he commenced the formation of the Orthopedic Institution in Bloomsbury Square, since designated the Royal Orthopedic Hospital,"<sup>3</sup> and the same year was published his well-known book, *Club-foot and Analogous Distortions*.

FIG. 3.



*Wm Detmold*

Our late honorary member, Dr. William Detmold (1808-1894), was born in Hanover, came to New York in 1837 "and introduced orthopedic surgery into this country."<sup>4</sup> Within two years after his

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, July 21, 1894, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> *Club-foot and Analogous Distortions*, William J. Little, London, 1839, Preface, p. xi.

<sup>3</sup> *Lancet*, January 7, 1854, pp. 19, 20.

<sup>4</sup> *Medical Record*, January 5, 1895, vol. xlvii. p. 22.



arrival in New York he had made one hundred and eighty subcutaneous divisions of the tendo-Achillis in cases of club-foot.<sup>1</sup>

At a stated meeting held on November 21, 1878, by the New York Academy of Medicine, by whose generous courtesy our meetings are held in these convenient rooms, ex-Vice-President, Dr. Detmold, in behalf of Dr. Little, presented a copy of the bust of Stromeyer, which now occupies an honored place in Woerishoffer Hall of the Academy's library. Thanks were unanimously returned to Dr. Little and Dr. Detmold, and the former was elected a Corresponding Fellow in the following year.<sup>2</sup>

It is evident that in current medical opinion Stromeyer was credited with having discovered subcutaneous tenotomy, Little with having widely disseminated a knowledge of it, and Detmold with having introduced it into America. It has seemed desirable, therefore, to present these notes in the TRANSACTIONS of our Association, together with portraits of those whose work has left such an important mark on orthopedic practice.

It may be added that not a few of the advances which have been made in surgery have been due to a previous false conception of the dangers which might follow the invasion of certain cavities and regions of the body or the disturbance of certain tissues. In the case of tenotomy Dr. Stromeyer was honored because it was believed that he had discovered a safe method of dividing tendinous structures whose fibres and sheaths are now seen to accommodate themselves readily to operative traumatism. His discovery greatly stimulated the study and practice of operative orthopedic surgery. It remains to be seen when mechanical orthopedic surgery will meet with a commensurate recognition. A wider diffusion of knowledge may give to it the precedence which now belongs to operative treatment. In the matter of congenital club-foot, for instance, it is plain that tenotomy will decline in value when it is generally seen that the affection is curable by an early and patient resort to purely mechanical means.

<sup>1</sup> New York Quarterly Journal of Medicine and Surgery, January, 1840, vol. ii. p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> From the minutes of the Academy and the statements of ex-President Dr. S. S. Purple.



