

The two-headed girl : death of the double-headed Girl : duplex child - Rita-Christina.

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THE TWO-HEADED GIRL.

The extraordinary Monophasia infant, called Rita-Christina lately brought to Paris for exhibition, and for which the authorities refused to grant a license, died last week, and was dissected in the presence of Cuvier and the most distinguished physiologists of Paris. The body has been placed in spirits of wine for preservation. The following anatomical details were satisfactorily ascertained:—

"There were two hearts, isolated and free from each other, but placed in a single envelope or pericardium, the hearts touching only at the points. The right ventricle of the heart of Rita was flattened and compressed, which accounts for the stoppage of the circulation of her blood. There was only a single liver, in consequence evidently of the union of the liver of each on the median line, which proves that there were two lobes of spleen and two gall vessels perfectly distinct. There were also two stomachs, and two small intestines of first passages, which were united ten or twelve inches before their entrance into the cecum. The cecum, as well as the large intestines, which appeared more particularly to belong to Christina, were single. There were two distinct matrices, the one situated as usual behind the bladder, the second being separated from the first by the rectum, and other intestines. The peritoneal cavity was divided by a central mediastine, joined below by a single diaphragm, which, like the liver, resulted from the junction of the median line of the diaphragm of the two subjects. This circumstance, very interesting in itself, became particularly so from its affording a probable explanation of the almost instant death of Christina after her sister had ceased to live; for half of the diaphragm being paralysed, and its continuity still existing, it is easy to understand how the contractile action of the other half should have suddenly been arrested. The opening of the body of Christina-Rita has not furnished any very precise idea of the nature of the disease by which death was produced. A slight adhesion of the posterior part of the pleura of the right side, with the emphysema of the lungs, indicated the existence of an inflammation of that membrane, but neither intense nor extensive, and not such as could have produced immediate death. Death might rather, perhaps, have been imputed to a considerable accumulation of feculent matter in the rectum. Nothing could have been more easy than to have removed this accumulation, which has produced such an unfortunate result. A slight aperient would certainly have sufficed; but no medical assistance had been called, and Christina-Rita has died for want of help, in the midst of Paris, in a city where so many celebrated physicians would have been happy to have lent their assistance for an object so highly interesting to men of science. But the relatives seemed to have been ignorant of the facility of procuring relief; embittered, no doubt, by the refusal they had experienced from the authorities, and prevented from making application by the distress in which that refusal had plunged them. The remote causes of the disease by which death was produced may doubtless be traced to the delicate constitution of Rita, and to exposure to the first colds of winter in apartments very imperfectly heated. It was with difficulty that Rita supported the fatigue of travelling, while her sister seemed to suffer no sort of inconvenience. In the towns where they were well received, and where they could stay a long time, Rita recovered her health with surprising rapidity, so rapidly that M. St. Hilaire says he has observed nothing equal to it in an isolated being, and ascribes it to the support received from her sister Christina, who being endowed with a very robust organization, had no doubt greatly contributed to these sudden restorations. Their stay at Lyons had been very favourable to their health. They seemed even well on their arrival in Paris, although Rita appeared to be fatigued; but here, when the severity of the season required the greatest care, the relatives, deceived in their hopes by the interference of the authorities, were reduced to a mode of life inconsistent with the care which was necessary for the preservation of the child. It is known that Rita only was unwell, and that Christina, whose health was good to the end, was suddenly struck dead at the moment when her sister expired. The perfect health of Christina is the more surprising when it is considered that the accumulation or interruption to which the death is ascribed was situated in that part of the intestines which was common to the two sisters; but it must be remembered, that an interruption which may be slight and indifferent to a well constituted, and even vigorous body, like that of Christina, might be serious to one so debilitated as that of her sister. The heart of Rita, compressed by that of Christina, and otherwise straightened in its movements, found itself incapable of re-acting against the congestion produced by the very considerable interruption in the great intestine.

DEATH OF THE DOUBLE-HEADED GIRL.

The child with two heads, lately arrived at Paris, died a few days ago. Rita, or the right side of the infant, had been ill for three days, and her illness did not appear in any degree to influence the health of Christina, the other side; so that at the moment when Rita had given up the ghost, Christina was hanging to the breast of her mother and playing with her face. But suddenly she let go, heaved a sigh, and died. At the end of ten minutes Christina was cold, while Rita, who had first died, still retained some warmth eight hours afterwards.

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"There was only a single liver, in consequence evidently of the union of the liver of each on the median line, which proves that there were two lobes of spleen and two gall vessels perfectly distinct.

"There were also two stomachs, and two small intestines of first passages, which were united ten or twelve inches before their entrance into the cecum. The cecum, as well as the intestines, which appeared more particularly to belong to Christina, were single.

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"The peritoneal cavity was divided by a central mediastine, joined below by a single diaphragm, which, like the liver, resulted from the junction of the median line of the diaphragm of the two subjects. This circumstance, very interesting in itself, became particularly so, from its affording a probable explanation of the almost instant death of Christina after her sister had ceased to live; for the half of the diaphragm being paralysed and its continuity still existing, it is easy to understand how the contractile action of the other half should have suddenly been arrested.

"The opening of the body of Christina-Rita has not furnished any very precise idea of the nature of the disease by which death was produced. A slight adhesion of the posterior part of the pleura of the right side, with the emphysema of the lungs, indicated the existence of an inflammation of that membrane, but neither intense nor extensive, and not such as could have produced immediate death. Death might rather, perhaps, have been imputed to a considerable accumulation of feculent matter in the rectum. Nothing could have been more easy than to have removed this accumulation, which has produced such an unfortunate result. A slight aperient would certainly have sufficed; but no medical assistance had been called, and Christina-Rita has died for want of help, in the midst of Paris, in a city where so many celebrated physicians would have been happy to have lent their assistance for an object so highly interesting to men of science. But the relatives seemed to have been ignorant of the facility of procuring relief; embittered, no doubt, by the refusal they had experienced from the authorities, and prevented from making application by the distress in which that refusal had plunged them. The remote causes of the disease by which death was produced may doubtless be traced to the delicate constitution of Rita, and to exposure to the first colds of winter in apartments very imperfectly heated. It was with difficulty that Rita supported the fatigue of travelling, while her sister seemed to suffer no sort of inconvenience. In the towns where they were well received, and where they could stay a long time, Rita recovered her health with surprising rapidity, so rapidly that M. St. Hilaire says he has observed nothing equal to it in an isolated being, and ascribes it to the support received from her sister Christina, who being endowed with a very robust organization, had no doubt greatly contributed to these sudden restorations. Their stay at Lyons had been very favourable to their health. They seemed even well on their arrival in Paris, although Rita appeared to be fatigued; but here, when the severity of the season required the greatest care, the relatives, deceived in their hopes by the interference of the authorities, were reduced to a mode of life inconsistent with the care which was necessary for the preservation of their child.

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"Christina-Rita was evidently not destined to attain an advanced age. There was too much inequality between the two parts; but every thing indicates that she might have lived for several years. Her premature death has deprived the world of many interesting observations which might have resulted from the development of two intellects existing, if not in a single organization, at least in two organizations so closely united. Of how many phenomena, psychological, physiological, and pathological, are we deprived? The study of a being like this, arrived at an age when she could account for her ideas and sensations, would be one of the most interesting which could be offered to the meditation of the philosopher.

"The possibility of the prolongation of the life of such a being to mature age appears to be demonstrated, and there is no longer any reason to doubt the general veracity of the authors who have written on such subjects. Some information has lately been given of a bicephalous girl who died in Hungary, at the age of 21, the death of the two parts not being instantaneous, as in the case of Christina-Rita, but an interval of five minutes having occurred between the death of the one and the other."—*Sci.*

DUPLEX CHILD—RITA-CHRISTINA.

A NUMBER of absurd and contradictory accounts of the bicephalous child, Rita-Christina, have appeared in different journals. The one which follows is drawn up by Dr. Martin St. Ange, whose opportunities of ascertaining all the facts were numerous, and whose narrative, while it is interesting, we have reason to believe is correct.

Rita-Christina arrived at Paris on the 26th of October, and many of the zealous there immediately hastened to make their observations—particularly with a view to physiology. The author of this account applied the stethoscope to different parts of the chest: the action of the heart appeared to be simple, but could not be exactly appreciated, owing to the frequency of the respirations; the pulse at the wrist of both appeared synchronous with the action of the heart, being 90 in the minute. The respirations were performed by the two alternately, but in equal number in a given time.

They were at this time scarcely eight months old, but both appeared to recognise the voices of their parents. Christina was more lively than Rita. They slept either at the same time or separately; and when this last was the case, the one that remained awake, laughed or cried, coughed or sneezed, or took the breast, without disturbing the other. It was curious to see the one awake and the other asleep in this manner: the latter, in this case, breathed quietly, while the former was more agitated, by which an undulatory motion was communicated to the abdomen, the viscera of which seemed to be carried from left to right, or vice versa, accordingly as they successively respired. When both slept, one might be awake without the other, by tickling the foot of the corresponding side. One might then be made to laugh without waking the other. Each had her own individual sensations communicated from both arms, and the lower extremity corresponding to her—the other not participating in them. But the parts on the median line were distinctly common; thus irritating the anus or vagina was immediately perceived by both. In emptying the bowels, both simultaneously strained.

There appeared nothing in their formation which presented any impediment to their living; and, in fact, their death seems to have been produced by the exposure to cold, which resulted from their journey, and the poverty of their parents depriving them of the necessary comforts. Rita, who was the weaker of the two, was attacked with bronchitis: the heat of her body now considerably exceeded that of Christina, and the pulse was no longer synchronous—that of Rita was 120, while Christina's was only 102 or 103. Christina did not suffer primarily, but her respiration was necessarily disturbed by the hurried condition of that of her sister. Three hours before their death Rita had extreme difficulty of breathing, the eyes were dull and half open, the skin covered with cold sweat, and the lower limb of her side swelled. None of these symptoms were observed about Christina, who continued still to take the breast. When Rita died, Christina suddenly expired, having previously appeared sufficiently lively. — *Journal Hebdomadaire.*