

M0016232: Display board: letter from Charles Scott Sherrington to Henry Charlton Bastian, 9 November 1885

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Nov. 9. 1885



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Dear Sir,

I have been unwell, and absent from Cambridge, or should have replied to your note before now. I read your paper in the Med. Chir. Soc. Trans. with the utmost interest, now several months ago. It is not only the first research of the kind in English, but had Türk & Bouchard alone prior to it. Your glycine method I used

only in my own research; it was in some cases the only way to demonstrate the lesion on the same side of the cord as the cerebral lesion; it detects a degeneration actual, apart from scars, for instance, before time has shaped for formation of the scar.

Your method by reflected light I have also tried, but only upon thin sections; I shall at first opportunistically apply it to more opaque thicker sections. I am anxious to meet with a better

method than I possess of demonstrating the "same-side" lesion, the lesion of what I have ventured to term "crossed" pyramidal tracts - which in the dog is characterized more by granulation - corpuscles than by sclerosis. However, for the present, the research is stopped as regards myself, by our Antivivisection Laws. Material in the shape of the spinal cord of a human hemiplegic I find difficult to obtain. With many thanks for so interesting a note,

Believe me, Sir,
yours faithfully,
Charles S. Sherrington
Dr. Charles Bastian.

THE SPINAL CORD - 1.

Sherrington to Henry Charlton Bastian (1837-1915), dated from Gonville and Caius, 9 November 1885.

Bastian became a professor of pathology in the University of London, and physician to University College Hospital. In 1871 he joined battle in the controversy over spontaneous generation, and in 1872 he followed up his small book on this subject with a very large work, *The Beginnings of Life*, in which he supported the heterogenists. In his later books he went further and put forward the doctrine of archebiosis, the production of life from non-living matter.

Bastian was an able physician, distinguished especially in neurology. The 'note', to which this letter is a reply, was obviously written to congratulate Sherrington on his paper on degenerations in the spinal cord of the dog, published in the previous April (*Journ. Physiol.*, 1885, vi, 177-91). This was Sherrington's third paper, and his first written by himself without the collaboration of Langley. The paper by Bastian to which Sherrington refers was an early and important communication on secondary degenerations of the spinal cord; it had appeared in the *Med.-Chir. Trans.* in 1867 (vol. 1, 499-537). In it Bastian first described and figured the comma tract, though it was eventually named after Schultze who re-described it later.

Türk began to publish his classical observations in 1851. Bouchard's book was published in French in 1866, and it was published in English in 1869 with the title *Secondary degenerations of the spinal cord*.