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## Obituary

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### John Freeman †



Dr. JOHN FREEMAN died on the 18th January 1962 in his 85th year. In him British Allergology has lost one of its pioneers and a leader in research and clinical practice.

FREEMAN was born in Leeds on the 19th July, 1877, the son of the solicitor J. J. FREEMAN, C.B.E. He studied medicine in Oxford, but his studies were interrupted by the Boer War in which he served as a lance-corporal in the Oxfordshire Light Infantry. Returning home after the war, he finished his clinical training at St. Mary's Hospital, graduated B. Ch. in 1905 and obtained the D.M. in 1907. From the start he was specially attracted by bacteriology. He won the Radcliffe Travelling Fellowship at Oxford and widened his knowledge by further studies in Paris, Berlin and Vienna. With such a background he was bound to fall under the spell of ALMROTH WRIGHT who was then at the acme of his research on opsonins and vaccine therapy. With FREEMAN's personality it was inevitable that through all vicissitudes he remained a lifelong loyal friend to his great chief. Thus was started the famous team of research workers at the Inoculation Department of St. Mary's Hospital – WRIGHT, DOUGLAS, FREEMAN and, drawn by FREEMAN's enthusiasm, FLEMING.

At that time the medical profession was beginning to be interested in hayfever. This disorder had been recognised as a clinical entity by BOSTOCK in 1828, but not until 30 years later was it shown by BLACKLEY to be due to pollen. In 1902 DUNBAR in Hamburg confirmed and extended BLACKLEY's work. Assuming that the noxious effect of pollen was due to a toxin, he endeavoured to produce a curative serum. He succeeded in obtaining a serum which completely neutralised the effect of pollen extract on hayfever patients. For several years this serum was used extensively for the treatment of hayfever patients, but later it fell into disrepute because many patients had become hyper-sensitive to the horse serum.

It was only natural that in the laboratory of WRIGHT, under the aegis of his famous dictum "The physician of the future will be an immuniser", immunological research should be undertaken on hayfever. LEONARD NOON, working with FREEMAN, adopted a different approach to DUNBAR. They undertook, not to cure each attack by passive administration of serum, but to prevent the disease by active immunisation with pollen extract through a carefully graded series of subcutaneous injections. This

method proved successful, and after NOON's untimely death in 1913 FREEMAN carried it on alone. When it was recognised that hayfever was not due to a pollen toxin but was one of the forms of the recently discovered syndrome of Allergy, he saw that the new method of treatment was applicable to the various other forms of allergy. Thus FREEMAN was the pioneer of the successful treatment of allergy.

This method had been developed from the idea of an active immunisation against the causative agent, or as we should say today, the "allergen". After the allergic nature of hayfever and other disorders was recognised, the method was commonly called "desensitization", a term of only clinical description. The subsequent discovery that under this treatment there developed a true antibody, distinct from the allergic reagins, the "Blocking Antibody", has proved the correctness of NOON and FREEMAN's original conception.

In the cramped space of the old Inoculation Department an enormous amount of research was carried out, vast numbers of patients attended for consultation and inoculation against infection and allergies. Not until much later could the work be transferred to the magnificent new WRIGHT-FLEMING Institute. For many years FREEMAN was Director of Clinical Bacteriology. In 1911 he was appointed Assistant Lecturer, in 1914 Lecturer on Bacteriology, jointly with FLEMING.

Then came the War, and FREEMAN went on a bacteriological mission to the Russian Army in Galicia where cholera and enteric fever were raging. Later he worked as assistant to WRIGHT in the Boulogne laboratory on the treatment of septic war wounds, and finally at R.A.F. Headquarters. In the last War he took a large part in the Blood Transfusion service.

Of his numerous publications special mention may be made of his first one (1907) on "Studies in Immunisation" and the well known book (1950) on "Hayfever: A Key to the Allergic Disorders" which sums up a lifetime's experience. Typical of FREEMAN's modesty was the dedication of this book "To L.N., this account of my stewardship". In this Journal we are fortunate in having two of his publications: A biography of NOON as an introduction to a reprint of NOON's first paper on hayfever (1953) and "Dangers and Disappointments in Hay-Fever Desensitization" (1955).

His interest in bacteriology and immunology was shown by his regular attendance at Congresses, even in the last years when his health began to fail. Members of this Collegium will remember FREEMAN's presence and its stimulating effect at the Symposium in Basle in 1955.

FREEMAN was a fine type of a man, active and vigorous and remarkably handsome. But what one will remember chiefly was his personality, so full of charm, his kind and generous nature, his constant faithfulness to WRIGHT who was not always easy, his loyalty to his many friends, and his deep interest in his research and the welfare of his patients.

To his widow and children the Collegium Internationale Allergologicum send their message of sincere sympathy.

CARL PRAUSNITZ