

MEDICINE

Shrinking From Rare Disease, Sailor Gives Self For Science

CAPT. CHARLES MARTELL grew twelve inches shorter. He twice broke an arm by merely rolling over carelessly in bed.

Now Capt. Martell, who fought his rare disease as he would pilot a disabled ship through a stormy sea, is dead. But the courage of this sea captain who insisted upon four operations, not so much to save him as to add to medical knowledge, is written in medical history.

The story was told to the American Society of Clinical Investigation meeting in Washington by Dr. Walter Bauer of Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, who had Capt. Martell's cooperation in studying his puzzling case, diagnosed in a last operation just before his death as the first mediastinal tumor ever found.

Capt. Martell's rare malady was a tumor of the parathyroid glands. This caused his bones to shrink and shorten to such an extent that he lost a full foot in stature. His bones also became so brittle that a small stress upon them caused them to break.

Eight times the doctors operated. The last four times they operated at the insistence of Capt. Martell. He wanted to know what was the matter. He wanted medical science to know in order that others might be saved. The eighth time the tumor was found and removed. It was too late to save his life for his kidneys had become involved.

Knowing he was doomed, Capt. Martell gave strict instructions for an

autopsy that would complete the medical record of his case.

Medicine has now a classical description of his rare malady, and other victims may thank Capt. Martell and his medical collaborators for knowledge that may save their lives.

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BOTANY-LINGUISTICS

Famous Biblical Names Based on Names of Plants

SOME OF THE best-known and most melodious names in the Bible, as well as in the Talmudic literature of the Jews, are based on flowers and other natural objects, and often reflect a fine blending of poetic appreciation of nature and the strong religious sense of the race. So declares Dr. Ephraim Ha-Reubeni, botanist at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who has for many years made a special study of the ethnobotany of Palestine and the neighboring regions.

Some of the earlier students of person-names in Hebrew, says Dr. Ha-Reubeni, have been led astray by sticking too closely to the original root forms of the names, even when these are obviously inappropriate. He holds that it is much more likely that a parent would name a child for an attractive animal or pleasant plant than for a mere grammatical quality. Thus the name Mary, or Miriam, has been held to be a deriva-

tive of the Hebrew word meaning bitter, or by others from a phrase meaning a drop from the sea. But Dr. Ha-Reubeni states that the name really comes from a plant of the sage family, native to Palestine, which has an odor resembling that of myrrh.

A less known feminine name, Hasenouah (Chron. 9:7), has been interpreted as meaning "hated." This derivation Dr. Ha-Reubeni thinks palpably wrong; he holds that the name is taken from "sneh," a thornbush.

One of Easu's sons was called Korah, and the same name was borne by the leader of a rebellion against Moses in the desert. This name has been interpreted as meaning "baldness." But baldness was a target for ridicule among the Children of Israel as it has always been elsewhere: witness the bad boys who teased Elisha because of his shining pate. For this reason Dr. Ha-Reubeni thinks that the name Korah was more probably derived from the "bald" or rayless flowers of the golden chamomile plant common in Palestine.

With all their overpowering awe of the names of God, "El" and "Yah," the ancient Jews did not hesitate to combine with them the names of natural objects, especially of plants, to make names for persons. Thus we have Mishael, from "maish," the service-tree; Mahalalel, from "mahalal," a species of oak; Havazinia, from "havazelet," a group of flowers; and Perachyah, from "perach," a flower. Such combinations Dr. Ha-Reubeni takes as an indication that his forefathers did not despise material things as contrasted with things of the spirit, but considered them to be themselves manifestations of the power and goodness of their God.

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The mummy of King Tutankhamen was directly accompanied by about 150 articles, such as jewelry, daggers, and royal and religious insignia.

A new iron alloy for making pumps, valves, and other chemical-handling equipment, is said to be practically unaffected by the action of hydrochloric acid at all temperatures and concentrations.

As recently as the seventeenth century, people in Europe seriously believed that unexplored parts of the earth contained curious inhabitants, such as people who had no mouths and nourished themselves by smelling fruits and flowers.

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