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Dr O. Uplavici (1887-1938)

Author(s): Clifford Dobell

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Dr O. Uplavici (1887-1938)

To students of the literature dealing with amoebic dysentery the name of O. UPLAVICI is probably not unfamiliar : but few authors are aware, apparently, of his singular story, so the following lines recording his life and death may therefore be acceptable to readers of *Isis*.

That his life was singular there can be no doubt : it is probably unique in the history of science. For Dr UPLAVICI, though a pure Czech, had a Greek father and a German mother. He was born in 1887, published his only paper in the same year, obtained his doctor's degree later in the United States, and now—after a chequered career in many countries—breathes his last, as I write, in England.

I first became personally acquainted with Dr UPLAVICI when I was writing my monograph on *The Amoebae Living in Man* (1919) about 20 years ago. Before then I knew of his doings only by hearsay. I tried, at the time, to assign him to his proper place in my bibliography, but was prevented by the inaccessibility of his writings, my own ignorance of the Bohemian language, and typographical difficulties—my printers being unable to cope adequately with the Czech alphabet. Unfortunately my words—admittedly incomplete and unsatisfactory—have since been misunderstood and wrongly copied or interpreted by others, so I shall now attempt to set matters right. The true story is as follows :

In *Časopis lékařův českých* [= *Journal of the Czech Physicians*] of Prague, Annual vol. 26, No. 5, 29 January 1887, a paper was published by the late Dr JAROSLAV HLAVA. In this he recorded *inter alia* that he had discovered amoebae in the stools and intestinal ulcers of patients suffering from dysentery. The discovery was not new, as similar observations had been made previously by LÖSCH, KOCH, KARTULIS, and others. But HLAVA also reported that he had succeeded in causing dysentery in cats by intrarectal

inoculation of dysenteric stools—presumably containing amoebae, though this is not clearly stated—from human beings. (He obtained 4 positive results out of 6 attempts.) It thus appears probable that these were the first experiments in which *Entamoeba histolytica* was transmitted from man to the cat : and as cats, or kittens, have since been used extensively for the experimental study of amoebic dysentery, HLAVA's original observations have a definite historic interest and importance.

JAROSLAV HLAVA (1855-1924) was, among other things, Professor of Pathological Anatomy at Prague. He was a distinguished man, and for many years the *doyen* of the Czech medical profession. His career is briefly chronicled in obituary notices which appeared in 1924 in the *Bull. Acad. Méd.* (3 sér. 92, 1200) and *Ź. Amer. Med. Ass.* (83, 2033). At all events, his name is not unknown, and his achievements inspire respect.

I have hitherto been unable to find any volumes of the *Journal of the Czech Physicians* (Prague) in London or elsewhere, and the *World List of Scientific Periodicals* shows no location in any library in Britain. But after long and fruitless search for HLAVA's original paper I finally obtained (in 1924) a complete typewritten copy from Dr J. DRBOHLAV (Prague); while another Czech friend, Dr F. ŠIMER (Bratislava), afterwards very kindly translated the whole of it into English for me. To both of these colleagues I am deeply indebted for this indispensable help in composing the present little biography.

HLAVA's paper of 1887 was written wholly in the Czech (Bohemian) language and was entitled " O úplavici. Předběžné sdělení " [= On dysentery. Preliminary communication]. So far as I have been able to ascertain, no translation or further communication in any language was ever published; and the original note is known to most workers solely through a brief review signed by the late Dr S. KARTULIS of Alexandria. This review, or abstract, was published in German in the *Centralblatt für Bacteriologie und Parasitenkunde* (as it was then entitled), vol. 1, p. 537; 1887. But by some extraordinary mistake the author's name (HLAVA) was there entirely omitted, and the title of his paper (O úplavici = On dysentery) was given in its place as " Uplavici, O." In this strange manner a new worker, O. Uplavici of Prague, made his first appearance in the literature of amoebic dysentery.

KARTULIS's abstract of HLAVA's paper certainly deserves to be called "strange." It appears under the author's name of "Uplavici, O.," and the name of HLAVA—its real author—is never mentioned throughout. Indeed, KARTULIS refers to him personally as "Uplavici," and even speaks of his own correspondence with a man of this peculiar name. It seems curious that anyone, sufficiently acquainted with the Czech language to be able to review a paper written in it, could confuse the author with the title of his work; and the position becomes still more remarkable when one examines the indexes of the *Centralblatt* (vol. 1). In the contents to the number (N^o 18) in which HLAVA's paper is abstracted, his name is given again as "UPLAVICI, O." (p. 552) : but in the subject-index to the volume (p. 775) it appears as "HLAVA, UPLAVICI," while in the author-index at the end (p. 784) "HLAVA" is the only entry—"UPLAVICI" vanishing completely, without any explanation.

This situation has naturally led to much confusion in the literature of amoebiasis, and to the attribution of HLAVA's "Preliminary communication" to various authors. It is sometimes correctly referred to HLAVA himself (though without initial or other qualification) : to "O. HLAVA" (instead of J. HLAVA) : to "HLAVA, UPLAVICI" (as though UPLAVICI were HLAVA's forename); and to "O. HLAVA (O. UPLAVICI)," as though the two names were synonyms. In a recent paper *both* HLAVA and UPLAVICI are mentioned—as two different workers who studied dysentery in cats in early days. For these and similar errors there is good excuse; so it would be unfair, perhaps, to cite particular authors in illustration of mistakes which have been committed somewhat generally.

I must mention specifically, however, the well-known *Index-Catalogue of Medical and Veterinary Zoology* compiled by STILES and HASSALL (Washington), for it was here that UPLAVICI received his degree. In this publication HLAVA's paper is first indexed—though the single entry is incomplete—under his proper name (but with the wrong initial "O.," presumably borrowed from UPLAVICI) in Part 10 (1905). But in Part 31 (1910) the same paper (5 entries) is also assigned—without any explanation—to "UPLAVICI, O.," and the name is followed by the further information "Dr." [in square brackets]. Where and how the authors of the

Index-Catalogue learnt of his medical qualification are riddles to which I have no clue.

For fifty years the mysterious "Dr O. UPLAVICI" has now haunted respectable books and periodicals—in Europe, America, and even the Far East—in a most disconcerting and undesirable manner, and it thus seems high time that his ghost should be laid once and for all. I therefore hope that all future writers on amoebae and amoebic dysentery will eliminate his name finally from their bibliographies, and bear in mind that he never had any real existence. JAROSLAV HLAVA's paper of 1887 was written by himself, and "O úplavici" [= On dysentery] was its title: and there can surely be no justification for allowing the title—even with appropriate alteration in order to personify it—to usurp the authorship. As I announced at the beginning, "Dr O. UPLAVICI" is dead; and I can only add fervently "*requiescat in pace.*"

(*National Institute for
Medical Research, London*)

CLIFFORD DOBELL.

Editorial note.—This obituary was first published in *Parasitology*, the journal founded by G. H. F. NUTTALL and edited by D. KEILIN, vol. 30, p. 239-41, July 1938. Thanks to the courtesy of the author, of the editor and of the Cambridge University Press we are able to reproduce it in *Isis*. We desired to do so, in spite of the fact that as a rule *Isis* publishes only original papers, for pedagogical reasons. Dr. UPLAVICI is not the only ghost in scientific literature, but Dr. DOBELL has told his story so effectively that it will serve as a much needed warning. Remember Dr. UPLAVICI!

This note had been written for some time when I recalled other ghosts, already referred to in *Isis* (vol. 28, 269, 290). A dishonest contributor (or more than one) to the hastily compiled *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (6 vols., New York 1886-9) found it easier to invent biographies than to compile facts relative to known individuals, and thus introduced deliberately not one ghost but a regiment of them in that work. It is a pity that the rascal who perpetrated those evil deeds cannot be named. The disgrace must then fall upon the general editors JAMES GRANT WILSON and JOHN FISKE and the managing editor, ROSSITER JOHNSON, though extenuating circumstances may be urged in their behalf.

The first to discover those crimes was JOHN HENDLEY BARNHART, who published them under the title "Some fictitious botanists" (*Journal of the New York Botanical Garden* 20, Sept. 1919, 171-181). "In this he reprinted, with comments, fourteen biographical sketches of botanists, which, he was convinced, were entirely fictitious. According to accounts in the *Cyclopaedia*, the subjects of these sketches, with one exception, were Europeans who had come to the New World to study the botany of Latin America. The one exception was born in the West Indies but later settled in France. Although several of them visited the United States, none

remained very long, and not one of the sixty-nine works which they are said to have written deals with territory which was a part of the United States when the book in question was written. Most of them lived in the eighteenth century or earlier, although a few lived on into the nineteenth century."

Further investigations were made and thus far 47 fictitious biographies have been discovered, with the almost certain belief that there are considerably more, as only two letters H, and V, have been systematically studied. See the article of MARGARET CASTLE SCHINDLER (of Goucher College, Baltimore, Maryland) : "Fictitious biography" (*American historical review* 42, 680-90, 1937). Says Miss SCHINDLER : "The writer (or writers) of these articles must have had some scientific training, for most of the creations are scientists, and sufficient linguistic knowledge to have invented or adapted titles in six languages. He was certainly familiar with the geography and history of Latin America. Most of the places visited by his characters are real places, and most of the historical events in which they participated are genuine. However, he sometimes made mistakes by which his fraudulent work can be detected."

Beware of the *Appleton's Cyclopaedia* !

G. S.