**Hirudo medicinalis** is the commonly used species of leech in both Britain and the USA, and is reared on specialist leech farms. If required, stockists will dispatch a consignment by express delivery. In hospitals with large plastic surgery departments, where leeches are sometimes used, the pharmacy will keep a small stock available for immediate use. They are easily kept in a muslin covered glass or plastic tank of water at 20°C and will live up to a year without feeding provided the water is changed regularly.

The leeches were obtained by express delivery from Biopharm, a leech farm in Swansea.

We thank Mr J Thomsitt for permission to report on this patient and Ms Karen Jones for photography.


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**FIFTY YEARS AGO**

A Fifteenth Century English translation of John of Arderne’s *de Cura Ocularum*

By R R James, Woodbridge

John of Arderne was the first of a long line of celebrated English surgeons. He was born in 1307 and was in practice at Newark-on-Trent from 1349 to 1370. In the latter year he moved to London and in 1377 he wrote his booklet which forms the subject of this paper. We do not know the date of his death, nor do we know where he learnt his art. In one of his writings he describes himself as ‘chirurgus inter medicos’, and in another as ‘cirurgicorum minimus’; but he was evidently in extensive practice and his writings cover a very large field. Perhaps his best work was on fistula-in-ano, piles and rectal cancer. This displays great powers of observation and is well documented with case records. It is decidedly original. The same cannot be said of his treatise on the cure of the eyes; it is for the most part a compilation from the work of others, notably Lanfranc. Ophthalmologically it is worthless, but without interest.

A precious oynement for blyered yene and watery. Take a clene holowgh basyne & anoynit it with inne with buttere dat is not salt and afterward whele de basyne uppone a vessell dat a manays uryne is inne, tarte & hote & so let it stande styll yll it be colde. Afterward that schalbe taken dat cleyvd withinne to de basyne de weche is blewnyshe of colour & ther schalbe putte therto a litill de de gree of a caponne & des schalbe wele medlyd togydere ayene de soune & thanne boxe it.

With dis oynement de yelydys schulbe anonynt mediocrly with a lyttyll slice at eve when he gocht to bedde & bynde it with a bonde tylle one de morowe.

This oynement cureth beste above alle de medicines in de worde de blyered yene & de waterynge yene as wele in crokdomen as in oder, de weche I have often tynmes provyd per certo. And after Johannem Damascenum in alle de sorowe de yene & aynest defawe of de syghte fiurste it behoveth dyelligently to consyndre wheyther it be of hote cause or of colde, & yf it be of hote cause fiurste de mater schalbe defyeded cum surago aceto in III days or IIII. And whanne de mater is dygeste ther schall thane be yoven furste a clystere mollificatyf de mor*.

That schall devoyd all de bodye & dat schall be done with ¥½ of de a lectuarye made of de juse of rosys & made scharpe with Dyagredye. And thanne thou maist sywerly werke with diverse remedies in de seyd places after that de semeth to speede.

In colde cause de mater also schall fiurste be defyed cum oximell diuretico i squillitico & thane ferdermore de clysterey schalbe yoven as it is aforesyde & by de morowe alle de bodye schalbe purgyed cum ¥½ from Jorapige Galef. And afterwarde he schall procede foorth sywerly to de places of remedy & speede wele... Here ends the Ms. of the cure of the eyes.

*The interpreting of Galen.

To my regret I have not been able to compare the proof with the original, and so some errors in 15th century spelling have probably crept in.