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New Publication Announcement

Striving for the Comfort Zone: a Perspective on Julius Jeffreys

Andrew Marshall & Judith Marshall

Julius Jeffreys (1800-1877), was a prominent Victorian era scientist and surgeon. He was employed by the Honourable East India Company for 13 years. While in India he recommended the use of hill stations, developed air conditioning systems and reduced pollution from fireplaces. On returning to England in 1836, he designed the Respirator, a device for warming inhaled air, to ease the suffering of those afflicted with tuberculosis and other lung diseases. While not a familiar item now, the Respirator was mentioned in the works of Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell and William Makepiece Thackeray.

In 1843, he wrote a significant book on the workings of the human respiratory system that described aspects of lung volumes for the first time. The nomenclature he devised was used for a century, before being superseded, but was not attributed to him.

He was elected a member of several learned societies, including the Medical and Chirurgical Society and the Royal Society. He worked with, and in some cases had disagreements with, a number of eminent scientists of the day, including Charles Babbage, William Hallows Miller, Justus von Leibig, John Snow and Neil Arnott.

Julius was awarded approximately twenty patents, including one for propelling becalmed sailing ships, designs for sunblinds, an illumination system for homes, methods for freezing and transporting foodstuffs, in addition to several for the Respirator. Towards the end of his career he wrote his finest work "The British Army in India", describing his experiences in India, and ways to improve the health and moral of troops in India.

He had strong religious convictions, with traditionalist views. He was highly critical of attempts by the Oxford Movement to change worship forms of the Church of England, and wrote a pamphlet on the subject. He also believed that the army should be for defence only. He was passionately against the Opium trade, and wrote an open letter to Sir Robert Peel denouncing the importation and production of the drug.

Julius was also influential in the development of the Otago / Dunedin community of New Zealand, with numerous friends and relatives emigrating to the outpost at his suggestion. He himself had decided to emigrate, but changed his mind at the last minute.

Julius Jeffreys passed away on May 13th, 1877 in Richmond, Surrey at the age of 76.

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