Book review

JACQUES FORESTIER. DES STADES AUX THERMES. VIE D'UN GRAND RHUMATOLOGUE. Jacques ARLET. Aix-les-Bains, France. National Publi Productions, 1988.

A few years ago, an excellent biography of the late Jacques Forestier was published by the well-known Toulouse rheumatologist Jacques Arlet. Because of the French language in which it is written, the modesty of the author and the failure of friends to send a review of the book in due time, I fear this book escaped attention. European rheumatologists are interested in J. Forestier, since many of them were influenced by him either directly or indirectly. All rheumatologists should know him as he was one of their outstanding colleagues who has put his original imprint on medicine and rheumatology for some thirty to forty years.

The book, written in an easy and vivid style, is well within the knowledge of French of most of the readers of this journal. The story is fascinating. Born in 1890, Jacques Forestier became known first as a sportsman and Olympic medallist. Indeed, he played rugby in the French University team, and was selected for international games such as Wales-France in 1912 and in the 1920 Olympic Games, in which France won the silver medal.

Dr. Forestier started his post-graduate education in J.A. Siccard's Department of Neurology. In a study of the elimination of intramuscular injections of Lipiodol® in rabbits, by error he injected some of the iodinated oil in the lumbar canal. Forestier immediately realized that Lipiodol® could aid in the localization of spinal tumours and could be used in the visualization of other body cavities. He injected Lipiodol® into bronchi, uterus and veins. In 1925 Forestier travelled to the USA

to present his discovery of contrast radiography at the Congress of Radiology and gained tremendous success. He was also among the first to inject sclerosing solutions for the treatment of varicose veins.

At the end of the twenties, Dr. Forestier started to experiment with a water soluble goldsalt for the cure of rheumatoid arthritis. He treated numerous patients whom he followed-up for decades. Because he lacked controlled studies and for fear of toxicity, his American colleagues gave him less support for his use of gold than for Lipiodol®.

In the thirties, Forestier became interested in ankylosing spondylitis. Together with Jacqueline and Rotès-Querol, he published in 1951 a monograph on this subject, which remained for years the most authoritative work on this topic. The book was translated into English in 1956.

In the same book, in the chapter on differential diagnosis, Forestier gave a clear clinical and radiological description of "vertebral ankylosing hyperostosis", often referred to as Forestier's disease. He later helped to delineate another rheumatic condition, that he called "rhizomelic pseudo-polyarthritis" (polymyalgia rheumatica).

Professor Arlet gives a lot of details and original pictures and documents about Forestier as a sportsman, an army physician in World War I, a distinguished clinician, a thermal physician and a scientist, as well as a man, a husband, a father and a grandfather. Professor Arlet has enriched us with his contribution on humanity and science concretized in Jacques Forestier, a really great rheumatologist.

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