

## The “Ex Libris” of Dr. N. A. Torshujev

### TO THE EDITOR:

In Leviticus 13, verse 45, the Old Testament gives clear instructions that a “leper” must make himself recognized and must warn the healthy of his approach. The unfounded fear and prejudice has remained with us and will probably persist long after the disease is eradicated from our planet. It was, however, officially practiced in the Middle Ages when leprosy sufferers were obliged by law or long practice to carry a horn, clapper, or bell to signal their presence and to solicit alms; a Belgian dictionary of the 15th century gives the definition “in-

strumentum leprosum cum tribus Lobulis cuius sonitu excitantur homines ad beneficiendum eis”! (3).

Leprosy had a great impact on medieval Christian art and literature and, indeed, the clapper was the quasi-official attribute of the “lepers” in medieval paintings, engravings, statues, stained glass windows, and in beautiful miniatures of cherished prayer books. In the Codex Practicus of Theoderich, Bishop of Burgundy, on a miniature by Vincent de Beauvais, in the famous Evangelium of Geilers (Strassburg 1515), we see the different forms of clappers. Not a single orig-



FIG. 1. "Leper" with clapper, 16th century; Costume Library, Berlin, Germany.

inal clapper remained for posterity since they were buried with the "lepers," hidden, or destroyed<sup>(3)</sup>.

Lipperheide's Costume Library in Berlin kept a collection of drawings of the clothes, hats, outfits, horns, clappers, and bells stigmatizing the leprosy sufferers (Fig. 1). The iconography of leprosy is a wealth of knowledge on this fascinating subject, the history of medicine, and leprosy in particular. The German Leprosy Relief Association organized a prized exhibition in Munich in 1982, presenting a voluminous collection of the iconography of leprosy<sup>(3)</sup>.

The "leper with clapper" even appeared on a colorful stamp issued in 1961 by Monaco, honoring the role played by the "Ordre Souverain de Malte" in the fight against leprosy (Fig. 2). The stamp shows a "leper" in typical clothing with a clapper in his hand on the street of a medieval town. The illustration was certainly taken, if not copied,



FIG. 2. "Leper" with clapper, 1961 postage stamp, Monaco.

from a 17th century print exhibited in the Berlin Costume Library (Fig. 1).

The "Ex Libris" labels are destined to mark the name of the books' owner. Interestingly, they usually show the profession of the proprietor of the book. Great artists of the 16th century, Albrecht Dürer, Lucas Cranach and Hans Holbein, were among the many masters of the "Ex Libris" art. To my knowledge, there is only one "Ex Libris" ever printed which shows a "leper" with a clapper. It was the opus of the Russian artist L. A. Litosenko, and it was commissioned by Dr. N. A. Torshujev (Fig. 3). The "Ex Libris" clearly shows the profession of the owner. Dr. Torshujev was a professor of dermatology of the medical school in Rostov on the Don River in the U.S.S.R. He was a recognized expert on leprosy and syphilis, a prolific writer (see the *Int. J. Lepr.* 1965-1973), and a most efficient scientist, responsible for leprosy control and the fight against venereal diseases in his country. His "Ex Libris" shows, in front of Gothic medieval buildings, a "leper" with a clapper and a prostitute, both in their "uniforms" as known from the iconography and history of leprosy, syphilis, and prostitution. Those



FIG. 3. "Ex Libris" of Dr. Torshujev.

who know Dr. Torshujev can recognize with certainty that both were inspired by the illustration from the Berlin Costume Library.

The literature of "Ex Libris" illustrations is richly documented and catalogued by collectors. The medical profession is leading in this graphic art (2-4). "In arte voluptas"

(pleasure in arts), wrote G. Semmell, a doctor in the village of Zagorsk, on his "Ex Libris." The largest collection of "Ex Libris" labels was that of Dr. E. Alexandrovic, an army doctor in Leningrad. He left his collection of 26,800 "Ex Libris" labels to the Academy of Science in 1958. The Academy of Fine Arts in Leningrad kept 2500 "Ex Libris" labels, a collection of Dr. E. Sokolovsky (1). Studying the "Ex Libris" of hundreds of physicians, each of them reflects the special interest of the owner in the field of medical sciences. The "Ex Libris" of Dr. Torshujev merits our special attention.

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