ROSALIE

The brazilian female monkey of Charcot

Hélio A.G. Teive¹, Walter O. Arruda¹, Lineu C. Werneck²

ABSTRACT - Jean-Martin Charcot, the father of Neurology, a very austere and reserved man that did not express affection freely for human being, had a profound affection to animals, particularly to a small female monkey, called “Rosalie”, which came from Brazil and was a gift of Dom Pedro II to Charcot.

KEY WORDS: Charcot, female monkey, “Rosalie”, Brazil.

Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893), the father of Neurology, was the first professor of nervous system diseases in a formal way. He studied as vast array of neurological diseases and gave classical description¹ (Fig 1). Charcot created the famous anatomo-clinical method, where he examined the patients and focused on clinical nosography and classification and then, after the patient’s death, in the autopsy, he analysed anatomic lesions, both macro- and microscopically².

Despite his studies with human autopsies, Charcot never allowed vivisection of animals at the Salpêtrière hospital and he had a passionate affection for animals, particularly dogs and a small monkey. Two dogs, “Carlo”, the Labrador, and “Sigurd”, a big one dog, were close animals, but the favorite pet of Charcot was a small female monkey named “Rosalie”²-⁵.

CHARCOT AND “ROSALIE”

Charcot and Dom Pedro II, Brazilian Emperor, were related in both social (close friends) and medical terms (patient-physician relationship). Dom Pedro II had an affection to animals that was deeply shared by Charcot¹⁻². Historical data confirm that the small female monkey that lived at Charcot’s house came from Brazil and was a gift of Dom Pedro II to Charcot¹⁻⁷.

Charcot, that was austere and reserved man that did not express affection freely for human being, had a profound affection to this small female monkey, called “Rosalie”². This kind of monkey is very common in Brazil and belongs to Cebidae family, Cebinae sub-family, probably genus Cebus sp or Cebus apella. They have peculiar aspect (head and tail) and are very agile jumpers, runners, swinging and leaping through trees. They are very smart, funny, lovely and friendly also⁸ (Fig 2).

According Guillain’s biography of Charcot, “Rosalie” stayed togheter to Charcot at table during his meals and Charcot took care of her food, laughed with her, and was delighted when she snatched a nut or a banana from his own plate¹. In a paper published by Guinon, after Charcot’s death, the author comment: …Um singe, câline comme une chatte, prope comme un sou. Le patron l’aimait beaucoup et il s’amusait de toutes ses farces. Il lui avait ménagé une place à table ‘côté de lui, sur une chaise d’enfant ‘à tablete, et il était ravi quand “Rosalie” lui chipa une noisette ou une
friandise dans son assiette, ou, observant le mo-
ment où on ne la regardait pas, allait du bout de
sa queue prévaler une banana dans un compoti-
er. Et alors le patron riait, de ce rire silencioux qui
secouait ses joues, sa poitrine et toute sa person-
ne et qui animait et éclairait subitement son regard
habituellement concentré...*.

In his famous book about Charcot, Goetz, Bon-
duelle and Gelfand comments a tale recalled by
Charcot granddaughter, about the affair with the
small female monkey during a dinner in Charcot’s
house, with the presence of several famous per-
sons, including the Grand Duke of Russia. “Rosalie”
dismantled the dining room (a elaborate fruit
decoration in the dining room centerpiece), but
Charcot and the guest friends maintained a good
sense of humor2.

In conclusion, Charcot, that was austere and re-
served man that did not express affection freely
for human being. Had a profound affection to ani-
mals, particularly to a small female monkey, called
“Rosalie”, that came from Brazil and was a gift of
Dom Pedro II to Charcot27.

Acknowledgment - The authors thanks to Professor
Rogério Ribas Lange (Faculdade de Medicina Veterinária
da UFPR, Curitiba/PR), Professor José Américo de Oliveira
(Faculdade de Odontologia de Araçatuba/SP), Professor
Luiz A. de Lima Rezende (UNESP, Botucatu/SP), Professor
Andrew J. Lees (National Hospital for Neurology and
Neurosurgery, Queen Square, London, UK) and Professor
Christopher G. Goetz (Rush University Medical Center,
Chicago, IL, USA).

REFERENCES
and Brazil. Arq Neuropsiquiatr 2001;59:295-299.
3. Guillain G. JM Charcot: his life-his work. New York: Paul B. Hoeber,
1959:16-29.
6. Soublin J. D. Pedro II: o Defensor Perpétuo do Brasil. Memórias imagi-
7. Calmon P. História de Dom Pedro II. Rio de Janeiro: Livraria José