

Historical Article

Joseph Toynbee and his son Arnold: unpublished manuscript written by Adam Politzer

ALBERT MUDRY, M.D., JURG KUTTER, M.D.*

Abstract

In 1914, Adam Politzer (1835–1920) was invited to the Viennese Toynbee Hall to give a lecture. To prepare for his lecture, Politzer wrote a manuscript of 22 pages, seven of them are particularly interesting concerning biographical information on Joseph and Arnold Toynbee. These seven pages are presented in translation from German to English. Politzer particularly emphasizes the social qualities of these two men. This manuscript is representative of his high regard for Joseph and Arnold Toynbee. It completes the few existing biographies of Joseph Toynbee.

Key words: History of Medicine, 20th Cent.; Biography; Otolaryngology

In 1914, Adam Politzer (1835–1920) was invited to the Viennese Toynbee Hall to give a lecture. At that time, Politzer was retired and was curator of the Jewish Museum in Vienna.¹ According to his testament, he was also engaged in helping poor Jewish people.² For his subject, Politzer chose the Toynbee family in remembrance of Arnold Toynbee (Figure 1). Toynbee's name was associated with the foundation of settlements, at first in England, where students could work and improve the lives of the poor during their holidays. The first Toynbee Hall was inaugurated in 1884 in London by Canon Samuel Barnett, one year after the death of Arnold Toynbee.³ As well as undertaking teaching, Arnold Toynbee was committed to the development of adult education opportunities for the working class and worked with Barnett in this field. He argued that the gap between social classes needed closing, and that those with money and education should spend time, and live, among the poor. That was the basic rationale of Toynbee Hall.⁴ On the initiative of Marie Lang, the Wiener Settlement was founded by some Jewish Viennese women in 1901, with Elke Feder as the first director and Dr Karl Renner, later President of the First Republic of Austria, as president.⁵ The objectives of this settlement were the supervision, education and provision of meals for children whose mothers were working outside the family home, and the organization of evening meetings for mothers including lessons to improve their



FIG. 1

Arnold Toynbee (from Toynbee G. *Reminiscences and Letters of Joseph and Arnold Toynbee*, ex-libris A. Mudry).

ENT & HNS Specialist Lausanne, and the Department of ENT*, University Hospital, CHUV Lausanne, Switzerland.
Accepted for publication: 16 December 2003.

level of education and awareness of their responsibilities.⁶

To prepare his lecture, Politzer wrote a manuscript of 22 pages,⁷ seven of which are particularly interesting concerning biographical information on Joseph and Arnold Toynbee. These seven pages are presented and translated here. The translation was difficult because the hand-written text contains many corrections. The other pages from the original manuscript are in relation to the general history of anatomy of the ear extracted from his history of otology published in 1907.⁸ Different remarks and comments have been added to enable better comprehension of the text.

The first page introduces the lecture (Figure 2):

‘The subject of my lecture honours the work of two men who have earned immortal glory in scientific and humanitarian areas. Joseph Toynbee and his son Arnold. The reason why I have chosen this topic, is due to the consideration that our federation, which achieved unfading merit in social and humanitarian fields, also included the Toynbee Hall into the circle of its humanitarian activities. Toynbee Hall, thanks to the devoted care of our honoured brother Dr . . . , developed into an institution, which—concerning the core of its humanitarian work—cannot be compared with others in this city. If I wanted to limit myself in

portraying the life of Arnold Toynbee, from whom our Toynbee Hall bears his name, I would leave this place after a short period, as meaningful as his work was, as short was his life. Arnold Toynbee departed this life at the age of 31. The reason why I included Joseph Toynbee, the father into the circle of my lecture is first in order to point out to what a great extent in our case the father’s moral and ethical characteristics were bequeathed to the son, and secondly to show that an intensive scientific activity can be linked together in harmony with a just as intensive philanthropic work.’

‘Who was Joseph Toynbee? Joseph Toynbee, with whom I had the fortune to have an amicable relationship, was the founder of pathological anatomy of the ear, that means he was the first person to examine a large number of people who were hard of hearing, dissect the ears anatomically post-mortem and establish the reasons for their hearing difficulty. Thus he founded the basis of modern otology’.

Politzer has already mentioned this factor in his history of otology: ‘Toynbee was the first who realized in otology that therapeutic progress depends on the knowledge of anatomy. That is why his research was directed to anatomy’.⁸ Joseph Toynbee (Figure 3) published his first paper on the pathology of the ear in 1841 in the *Medico-Chirurgical Transactions*, the same year he was appointed a

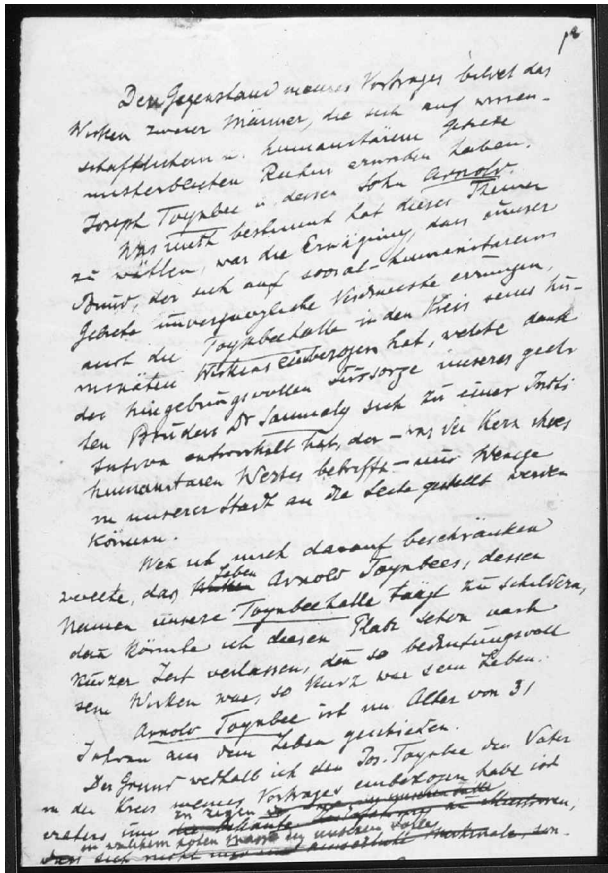


FIG. 2

Politzer’s manuscript page 1 (courtesy of the Institute for the History of Medicine, Vienna).

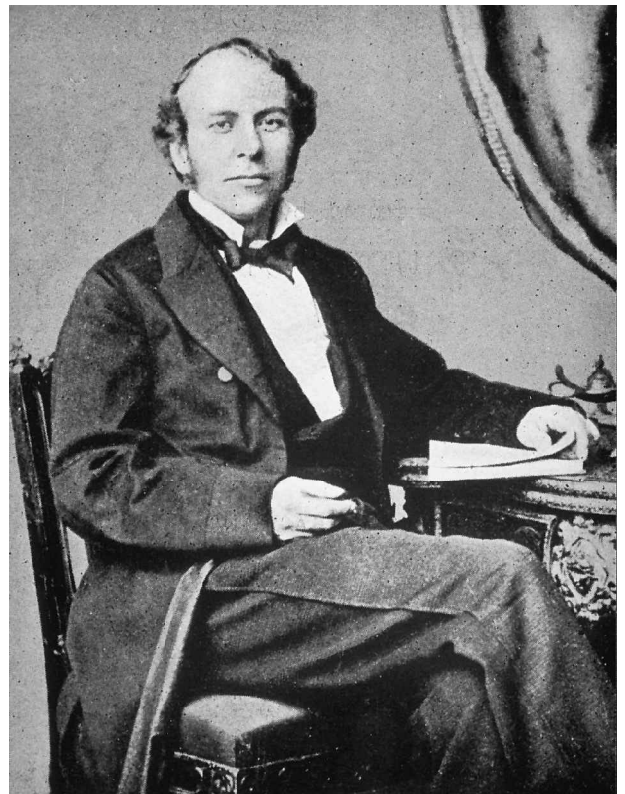


FIG. 3

Joseph Toynbee (from Toynbee G. Reminiscences and letters of Joseph and Arnold Toynbee, ex-libris A. Mudry).

member of the Royal Society of London. He introduced his topic with: 'I am bound to confess that the investigation of it is attended with more difficulties than are met with, I think, in the study of any other class of disease. Those difficulties, however, which formerly appeared to be most formidable, have been much diminished by the exercise of careful and patient attention, and I feel assured that the continued study of this branch of surgery, will be productive of still more satisfactory results . . . I trust that this communication will be regarded only as the commencement of my researches into the pathological conditions of the cavity of tympanum . . .'.⁹ From 1841, Joseph Toynbee regularly published papers concerning this subject.

'The life of Joseph Toynbee passed without any major incidents. His main work was situated in the medical scientific field. However, since this concerns only a medical audience, I will not be going into details of the Toynbee's research at this moment and will mention this part of his work only briefly. Overwhelmingly convinced that our federation is formed by men with lively interests in all branches of general knowledge, I will allow myself to insert a historical outline of the development of anatomical science as an introduction to Joseph Toynbee's curriculum vitae.'

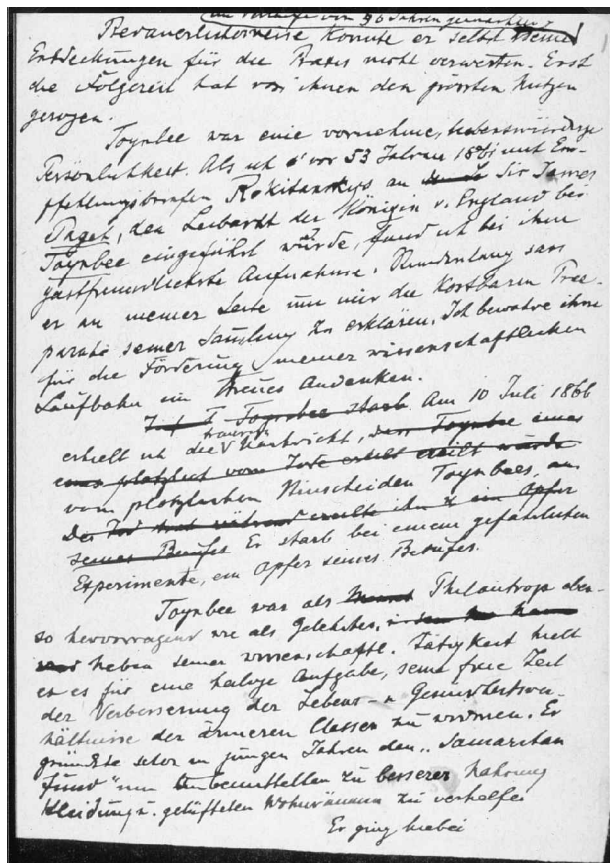


FIG. 4

Politzer's manuscript page 17 (courtesy of the Institute for the History of Medicine, Vienna).

In the next pages (2 to 16), Politzer presented the history of the anatomy of the ear extracted from his history of otology without new additions, thus the reason why this part of the text is not translated into English here. Nevertheless, Politzer placed particular emphasis on the Jewish physicians who contributed to this history. The last six pages (17 to 22) are related to the biography of Joseph and Arnold Toynbee and completely translated here (Figure 4).

'Motivated by Rokitsansky's work, Joseph Toynbee, born in 1815, dedicated himself to the investigation of the pathological changes in the ear. He wrote the results of his researches in a catalogue that includes the description of 1659 human ears. This catalogue forms the basis of modern otology for all time. Unfortunately he did not have the opportunity to put into practice the discoveries he made over the course of 30 years. Only later was it possible to obtain the maximum advantage from his work'.

This catalogue, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Preparations Illustrative of the Diseases of the Ear* was published in 1857 (Figure 5).¹⁰ This purely pathological catalogue was completed in 1860 with the publication of a more clinical book, *The Diseases of*

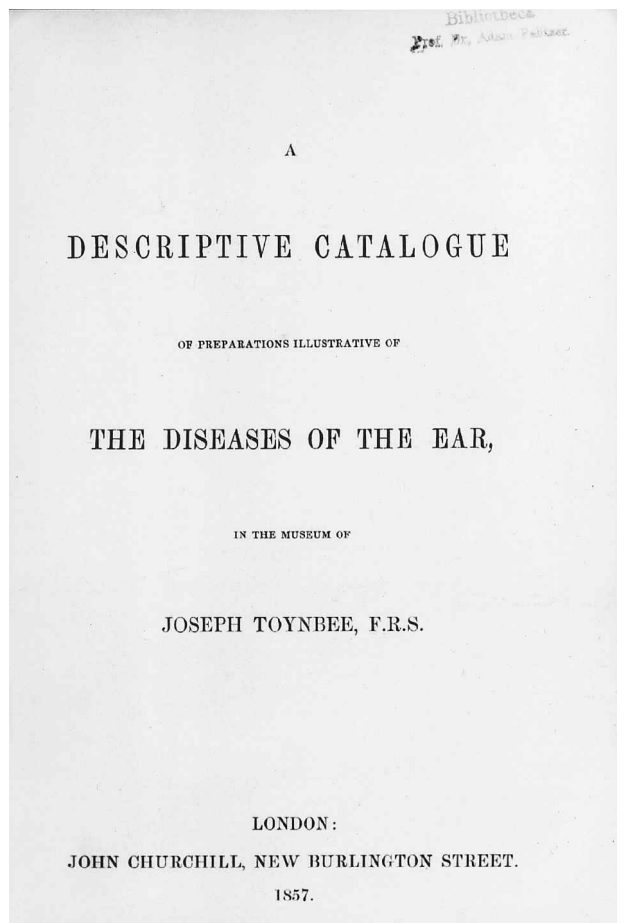


FIG. 5

Title page of *A Descriptive Catalogue of Preparations Illustrative of the Diseases of the Ear*. (personal library of Politzer, courtesy of the university library, Vienna).

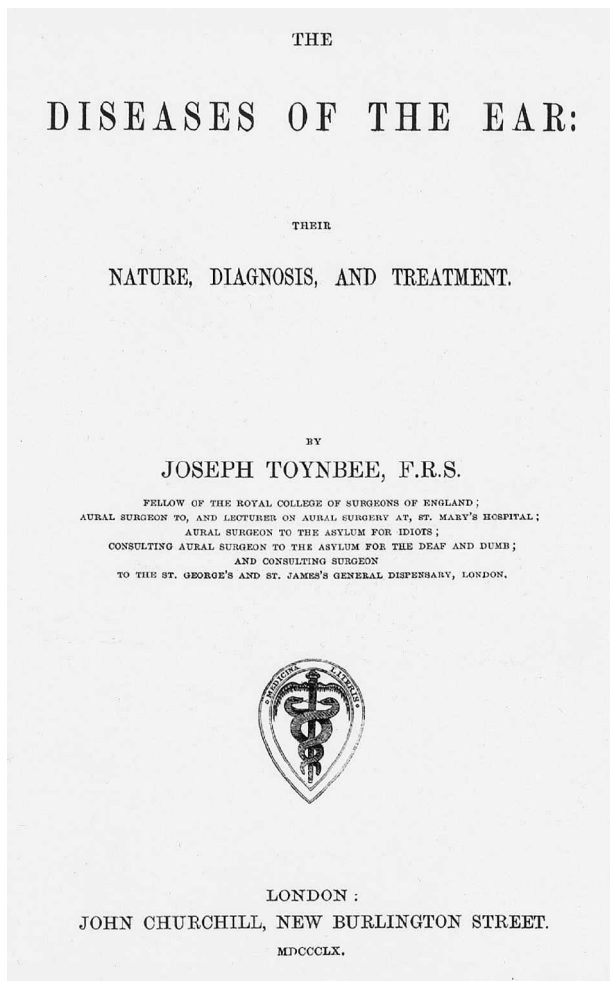


FIG. 6

Title page of *The Diseases of the Ear: their Nature, Diagnosis and Treatment*. (ex-libris A. Mudry).

the Ear: their Nature, Diagnosis, and Treatment (Figure 6).¹¹ This book is considered as a masterpiece in the history of otology: 'From a clinical point of view, Toynbee's work might seem out of date today, nevertheless it will be always a historical document of high value, as it is the first work about ear diseases on a pathologic anatomical basis'.⁸ It was re-edited and enlarged by a supplement by James Hinton (1822–1875), a pupil of Toynbee's, in 1868 after Joseph Toynbee's death (Figure 7).¹²

'Toynbee was a distinguished, friendly personality. When I was introduced to Toynbee 53 years ago in 1861 by Sir James Paget, the general physician of the Queen of England with a letter of recommendation from Rokitansky, I received a hospitable reception from him. For hours he was at my side in explaining the precious specimens of his collection. I will always be grateful to him for the support he showed me in my scientific career. On July 10th, 1866, I received the sad news of Toynbee's sudden death. He died during a dangerous experiment, a victim of his occupation.'

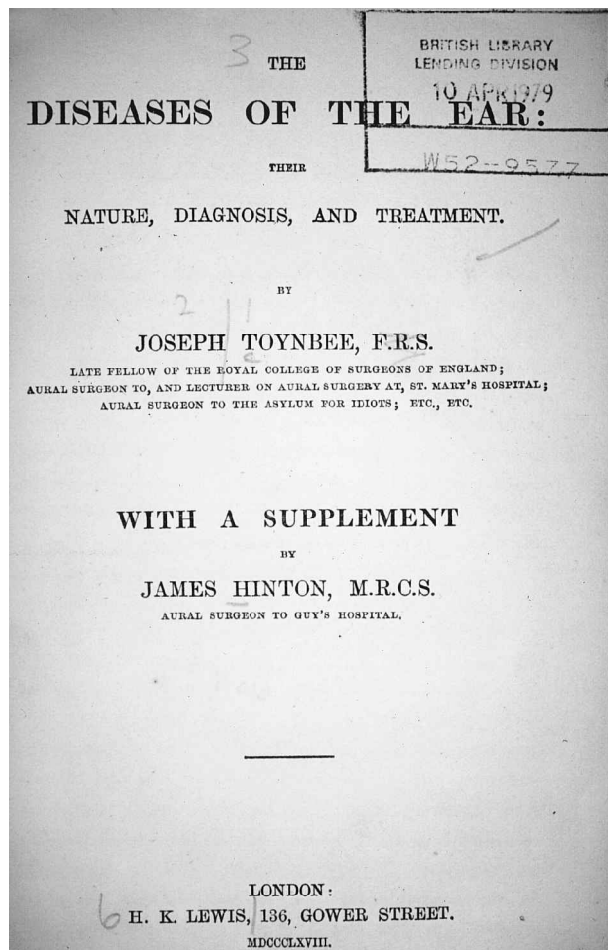


FIG. 7

Title page of *The Diseases of the ear: their Nature, Diagnosis and Treatment. With a Supplement* by James Hinton. (ex-libris A. Mudry).

Politzer had already published a more detailed biography of Joseph Toynbee in 1905 where he provided more recognition about the importance of Joseph Toynbee in the development of otology.¹³ He started this biography with: 'Modern otological science may, with reason, write Joseph Toynbee's name at the top of the list of its representatives'. Politzer finished it with: 'The most important fact that he established, thanks to numerous anatomical observations, was that, contrary to previous opinions that vaguely looked at most earache as being nervous, the major cause of hardness of hearing was as a result of peripheral processes of an inflammatory nature, with the principal site being the tympanic cavity'. He also gave a nice explanation of Joseph Toynbee's death: 'In order to understand to what extent it is possible, using the Valsalva test, to squeeze gases out of the mouth into the middle ear, and what influence chloroform gas and hydrocyanic acid gas, squeezed in the middle ear, exert on subjective sounds, he died suddenly a victim of his devotion to science, after a lifetime so completely devoted to the former'.

‘Toynbee was as outstanding a savant as he was a philanthropist. In addition to his scientific activity, he considered it a sacred task to dedicate his spare time to the improvement of living and health conditions of the poorer classes. He founded the “Samaritan federation” in order to help the poor to get better food, clothing and aired living spaces. Linked to this, his idea was that the physicians would combat diseases more thoroughly by improving the living conditions of the poor than through medicines. He especially stressed the importance of airing the living spaces. He really became a recognized authority in the field of ventilation and in 1847 obtained an order of parliament to issue a report on the state of London’s apartments for the poor and to make suggestions for their improvement. In Wimbledon, near London, at his country retreat, he worked hard giving lectures for the intellectual advancement of countrymen. He fought for the foundation of little museums in the countryside where all the objects of natural or cultural interests found within the surrounding five miles were collected and displayed. This example was copied throughout England. Toynbee’s sophisticated humanitarian sense was not allowed to expire after his death. It was continued by his son as a valuable heritage’.

Through his dealings with the problems of poverty and social reform, Joseph Toynbee came to attach considerable importance to closer contact between the classes. While basically an optimist, he regarded the gulf between the classes as distinctly unhealthy. The poor required the help of the more affluent classes, and closer contact between the two nations would elevate both. Having reduced the class problem to a question of education, Joseph Toynbee could not help wondering why the problem was so slow in solving itself. The practical expression of Toynbee’s view of cultural elevation was taken up by his son Arnold.¹⁴

‘Arnold Toynbee was born in 1852. When I first came to his parent’s house he was a nine-year-old, tender, pale boy with large black eyes (Figure 8). When his father died, he was 13 years old. In the 18th year of his life he went to the university of Oxford where he attended first Pembroke college then Balliol college, reading socio-philosophic and social economic studies. He was one of the best students, and it was here that he developed his ideas of raising the material and moral potency of the people. He carried out his studies with such enthusiasm that he was given the title of lecturer immediately after his graduation. His lectures gained such a reputation that numerous listeners of all social levels filled the lecture room. He worked indefatigably for the improvement of his socio-reformatory ideas. His fascinating personality and his . . . (miss 2 words). Starting in 1879 he gave in addition to his occupation as tutor, popular lectures in London and in other cities in England on the organization of work, which always expressed his sympathy for the poor population



FIG. 8

Arnold Toynbee child (from Toynbee G. *Reminiscences and Letters of Joseph and Arnold Toynbee*. ex-libris A. Mudry).

and the working class. His biographer Milner compares him with a magnet of unbelievable attraction for his ideas’.

In 1901, Lord Milner published a reminiscence of Arnold Toynbee.¹⁵ He gave a very good description of the character of Arnold Toynbee: ‘This real education he got from his father—a man of great gifts and original character . . . What was commanding was the whole nature of the man—his purity, his truthfulness, his unrivalled loftiness of soul . . . It might be said of Toynbee that he touched nothing which he did not elevate . . . But for the world the permanent value and importance of Arnold Toynbee lie in the impulse and direction which he gave, at a most critical moment, to the newborn interest of the educated in social questions, and to the aspirations of men of all classes after social reforms’.

‘During his walking tours through Whitechapel, the poorest district of London, Toynbee recognized the large difficulties in alleviating the suffering of the poor population. He came to the conclusion that the only way to help the poor was to live around them for a while to get to know their sufferings, needs and wishes. Several men from the universities enthusiastically joined the example set by Toynbee. Their aim was not only to improve the living conditions of the poor, but also to reduce as much as possible the large gap separating the poor from the wealthy. Toynbee

and his friends planned a settlement in Whitechapel. They planned to create a building where the people who carry the heavy burden of work and who did not have the privilege of a warm room waiting for them at home, could rest in domed halls. Their spirit could be lifted with music and instructive lectures and they could benefit from the double good of physical and moral refreshment. Unfortunately, Toynbee himself was not to experience the promised land of his ideal dreams. His delicate body was not equal to the important work done in the service of humanity. He was attacked by a serious disease. On March 9th, 1883, he succumbed to death surrounded by his deeply aggrieved friends.

Arnold Toynbee died after contracting meningitis: “He did not experience much bodily suffering; but sleeplessness brought on inflammation of the brain; and after seven weeks of illness he died”.¹⁶ He was buried beside his father in the churchyard of Wimbledon. In early childhood, he had suffered concussion of the brain in consequence of a fall from a pony; thereafter, exhaustion was apt to bring on sleeplessness.

His death caused deep mourning in England. Toynbee’s example showed that even in a short life, merit can be reached if enthusiasm for the welfare of the people is the mainstream of your work. However, an ideal for which he fought tirelessly for up to his last breath was not to fade with his death. Soon after his death, his friends met in order to make the project that was planned with Toynbee come true. His friend Cannon Barnett took their lead. In 1884, a year after Toynbee’s death, his ideas became reality and a settlement was set up in the suburb of Whitechapel. In just a couple of years, the beneficial effects of this institution were seen. Year after year one could sense around the Toynbee Hall an increase of civilized behaviour and the moral and intellectual characteristic of the population. Due to the example in London, Toynbee Halls were also initiated in other English cities and on the Continent with great success. The Jewish Toynbee Hall in Vienna, established at the beginning of our century, shows the most beautiful example of Jewish charity. The protection that our federation grants it and the special care that it gives it, will secure the glory and constant gratitude from following generations. A new era of the Jewish Toynbee Hall approaches. It will soon be represented by a working home worthy of it. It owes this to the . . . (miss 3 words) the setting up of a foundation by our dear brother Mr Mendel who unfadingly placed his name in the annals of Philanthropy and set up an eternal memory.’

This manuscript represents a sign of great recognition to Joseph and Arnold Toynbee. It completes the few existing biographies of Joseph Toynbee.^{17–21} Politzer puts forward the social qualities of these two men. Gertrude Toynbee, one of Joseph Toynbee’s daughters wrote about this aspect of her father:

‘Benevolence may be said to have been the mainspring of my father’s life’ and of her brother: ‘his great sensitiveness to the sufferings of others’.²² The reading of this manuscript shows once again that life has not only a professional aspect but also a social aspect, which is important for people who are in constant contact with other people as are otologists and ENT specialists.

References

- 1 Hanak W. *Papier ist doch weiss? Eine Spurensuche im Archiv des Jüdischen Museums Wien*. Wien: Jüdisches Museum, 1998
- 2 Politzer A. Testament und Codizille, Doc. zu A III 100/20, 1910–1920, Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, Wien
- 3 Briggs A, Macartney A. *Toynbee Hall. The First Hundred Years*. London: Routledge and Kegan, 1984
- 4 <http://www.infed.org/walking/wa-toynbee.html>
- 5 International federation of settlements and neighbourhood centres. [Http://www.ifsnetwork.org/who/history.asp](http://www.ifsnetwork.org/who/history.asp)
- 6 http://www.onb.ac.at/ariadne/vfb/fv_sett.html
- 7 Politzer A. *Joseph Toynbee and dessen Sohn Arnold. Manuskript eines Vortrag, 1914*. Doc. HS 582, Institut für Geschichte der Medizin, Wien
- 8 Politzer A. *Geschichte der Ohrenheilkunde*. 2 Bände. Stuttgart: Enke, 1907–1913
- 9 Toynbee J. Pathological and surgical observations on the diseases of the ear. *Med Chir Trans* 1841;**24**:190–211
- 10 Toynbee J. *A Descriptive Catalogue of Preparations Illustrative of the Diseases of the Ear*. London: Churchill, 1857
- 11 Toynbee J. *The Diseases of the Ear: their Nature, Diagnosis, and Treatment*. London: Churchill, 1860
- 12 Toynbee J. *The Diseases of the Ear: their Nature, Diagnosis, and Treatment. With a Supplement by James Hinton*. London: Lewis, 1868
- 13 Politzer A. Josef Toynbee. Esquisse historique-biographique. *Rev Hebd Laryngol Otol* 1905;**26**:385–94
- 14 Kadish Alon. *Apostle Arnold. The life and death of Arnold Toynbee 1852–1883*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1986
- 15 Milner GCB. *Arnold Toynbee, a Reminiscence*. London: Arnold, 1901
- 16 Montague FC. *Arnold Toynbee*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1889
- 17 Tröltzsch A. Joseph Toynbee. Ein Nekrolog. *Arch Ohrenheil* 1867;**3**:230–9
- 18 Guthrie D. The Renaissance of otology: Joseph Toynbee and his contemporaries. *J Laryngol Otol* 1937;**52**:163–76
- 19 Simpson J. Joseph Toynbee—his contributions to otology. *Proc R Soc Med* 1963;**56**:97–105
- 20 Wilson TG. Joseph Toynbee. *Arch Otolaryngol* 1966;**83**:498–500
- 21 Roggenkamp W. Joseph Toynbee. *Z Laryngol Rhinol Otol* 1972;**51**:612–7
- 22 Toynbee G. *Reminiscences and Letters of Joseph and Arnold Toynbee*. London: Glaisner, 1910

Address for correspondence:

Albert Mudry, M.D.,
ENT & HNS Specialist,
Avenue de la Gare 6,
CH-1003 Lausanne,
Switzerland.

Fax: 00-41-21-323 8325

E-mail: amudry@worldcom.ch

A. Mudry, M.D. takes responsibility for the integrity of the content of the paper.

Competing interests: None declared
