

# VARIOUS

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Various

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**The Mirror of Literature, Amusement,**  
**and Instruction / Volume 14,**  
**No. 401, November 28, 1829**

**The Siamese Twins**



The Engraving is an accurate sketch of this extraordinary *lusus naturae*, which promises to occupy the attention of the whole Town, and has already excited no ordinary curiosity among all ranks of the scientific and sight-loving. Deviations from the usual forms of nature are almost universally offensive; but, in this case, neither the personal appearance of the boys, nor the explanation of the phenomenon by which they are united, is calculated to raise a single unpleasant emotion. The subject is, therefore, not unfit for our pages, and the following descriptive particulars, which we have collected from various authentic sources, and our own observation, will, we are persuaded, be read with considerable interest:

The earliest account of the Siamese Twins is by Dr. I.C. Warren, of Boston, and was published in Professor Silliman's Journal of October last. They were received of their mother by Captain Coffin and Mr. Hunter, in a village of Siam, where the last-mentioned gentleman saw them, fishing on the banks of the river. Their father has been some time dead, since which they lived with their mother in a state of poverty. They were confined within certain limits, by order of the Siamese Government, and supported themselves principally by taking fish. Their exhibition to the world was suggested to the mother as a means of bettering their condition; to which proposition she acceded for a liberal compensation, and the promised return of her sons at a specific time. She accompanied them on board the ship and, as it was not about to sail for some time, she was invited to remain on board; but she declined, observing that she might as well part with them then as a few days hence. They were first exhibited at Boston, and subsequently at New York, in the United States. At Boston, Dr. Warren was appointed to report on them; and such of his observations as are free from anatomical technicalities, and otherwise adapted for our pages, will be found in the subsequent pages. In the meantime, we shall proceed with a more popular account of their present appearance, which has some of the most interesting characteristics of human nature.

They are two distinct and perfect youths, well formed and straight, about eighteen years of age, and possessing all the faculties and powers usually enjoyed at that period of life. They are united together by a short band at the pit of the stomach. On first seeing them, it may be supposed, so closely are their sides together—or rather, they over-lap a little—that there is no space between them. On examining them, however, they are found not to touch each other, the band which connects them being, at its shortest part, which is the upper and back part, about two inches long. At the lower front part the band, which is there soft and fleshy, or rather like soft thick skin, is about five inches long, and would be elastic, were it not for a thick rope-like cartilaginous or gristly substance, which forms the upper part of the band, and which is not above three inches long. The band is probably two inches thick at the upper part, and above an inch at the lower part. The back part of the band, which is rounded from a thickening at the places where it grows from each body, is not so long as the front part, which is comparatively flat. The breadth or depth of the band is about four inches. It grows from the lower and centre part of the breast of each boy, being a continuation of the cartilaginous termination of the breast bone, accompanied by muscles and blood-vessels, and enveloped, like every other portion of the body, with skin, &c. At present this band is not very flexible; and there is reason to believe that the cartilaginous substance of the upper part is gradually hardening, and will eventually become bone. From the nature of the band, and the manner in which it grows from each boy, it is impossible that they should be in any other position in relation to each other, but side by side, like soldiers, or coming up a little to front each other. Their arms and legs are perfectly free to move. The band is the only connexion between them; and their proximity does not inconvenience either; each of them, whether standing, sitting, or moving, generally has his arm round the neck or the waist of the other. When they take the arm from this position, so close are they kept together that their shoulders cannot be held straight; and the near shoulder of each being obliged to be held down or up, to allow them room to stand, gives them the appearance of being deformed; but two straighter bodies can scarcely be seen.

In their ordinary motions they may be said to resemble two persons waltzing. In a room they seem to roll about, as it were, but when they walk to any distance, they proceed straight forward with a gait like other people. As they rise up or sit down, or stoop, their movements are playful, though strange, not ungraceful, and without the appearance of constraint. The average height of their countrymen is less than that of Europeans, and they seem rather short for their age, even judging them by their own standard. They are much shorter than the ordinary run of youths in this country at eighteen years of age, and are both of the same height. In personal appearance there is a striking resemblance between them; this, however, is but on first impression, for, on closer examination, considerable difference will be observed. The colour of their skin and form of the nose, lips, and

eyes, denote them as belonging to the Chinese; but they have not that broad and flat face which is characteristic of the Mingol race. Their foreheads are higher and narrower than those of their countrymen generally. Both are lively and intelligent; they pay much attention to what is passing around them; and are very grateful for any little attention that is paid to them. As a proof of their intelligence, it may be stated that they learned to play at Draughts very readily, and were soon able to beat those who had assisted in teaching them. Their appearance is perfect health. To their friends and attendants, and to each other, they are said to be much attached. They appear to be excellent physiognomists, for they read the countenance of the visiter readily, and are easily affronted with any contemptuous expressions. It is said they have not learnt any manual art beyond rowing a boat, but they can run and jump, and climb cracks and rigging with great facility. They are dressed in short, loose, green jackets and trousers, the costume of their country, which is very convenient, and allows the utmost freedom of motion, but does not show the form of the boys to advantage. With their arms twined round each other, as they bend down or move about, they look like a group of statuary. Dr. Warren, in his report, states that he *never heard them speak to each other*, though they were very fond of talking with a young Siamese, who was brought with them as a companion. They, however, appear to have a means of communication more rapid than by words. The point most worthy of remark, in regard to their actions and movements, is, that they seem, generally speaking, to be actuated but by one will; and that from whichever of them the volition of the moment proceeds, it seems imperative upon both. Occasionally, there is an exception to this remark—as, on the voyage from Siam to the United States, when one wanted to bathe, and the other refused, on account of the coldness of the weather, they quarrelled on the subject.

Each has a name of his own—the one, *Chang*, and the other, *Eng*; but, when persons wish to address them as one—to claim their attention to anything, for example, or to call them—they are addressed as—*Chang Eng*.

The union of twins is not an unusual occurrence, and various anatomical collections present many such objects. Ambrose Paré relates several instances. Dr. Warren is, however, of opinion, that the *Siamese Boys* present the most remarkable case of the *lusus naturae* which has yet been known, taking into view the perfection and distinctness of organization, and the length of time they have lived. The whole phenomenon may be described in a very few words—*two perfect bodies united and bound together by an inseparable link*. As we have already stated, their health is at present good; but, observes Dr. Warren, "it is probable that the change of their simple living for the luxuries they now obtain, together with the confinement their situation necessarily involves, will bring their lives to a close within a few years." We hope that such will not be the result of their leaving their native shores; and we are much pleased with this passage in a letter from Drs. Samuel Mitchill and Anderson to Capt. Coffin—"They (the youths) are under the protection of a kind and benevolent gentleman, and we know you will take good care of them, and if they live, return them to their homes again." Of their strength many instances are related: since they have arrived in London they have lifted a gentleman of considerable weight, with great ease; and on this point Drs. Mitchill and Anderson say—"As they are so vigorous and alert, we readily coincide that in ten seconds they can lay a stout ordinary man on his back."

We shall not go out of our way to state half the curious questions which forcibly arose in our minds on visiting this interesting exhibition. One of the most important, and least easy of solution, is the structure of the connecting band—how it is kept alive—whether blood flows into and circulates through it from each, and passes into the system of the other—whether it be composed of bone, as well as of cartilage—and whether it could be safely divided? Upon examining the connexion, or *cord*, Dr. Warren says—"Placing my hand on this substance, I found it extremely hard. On further examination, the hardness was found to exist at the upper part of the cord only, and to be prolonged into the breast of each boy. Tracing it upwards, I found it to be constituted by a prolongation of the *ensiform cartilage of the sternum*, or extremity of the breast-bone. The cartilages proceeding from

each sternum meet at an angle, and then seem to be connected by a ligament, so as to form a joint. This joint has a motion upwards and downwards, and also a lateral motion—the latter operating in such a way, that when the boys turn in either direction, the edges of the cartilage are found to open and shut.

"Besides this there is nothing remarkable felt in the connecting substance. I could distinguish no pulsating vessel. The whole of this cord is covered by the skin. It is remarkably strong, and has no great sensibility, for they allow themselves to be pulled by a rope fastened to it, without exhibiting uneasiness. On ship board, one of them sometimes climbed on the capstan of the vessel, the other following as well as he could, without complaining. When I first saw the boys, I expected to see them pull on this cord in different directions, as their attention was attracted by different objects. I soon perceived that this did not happen. The slightest impulse of one to move in any direction is immediately followed by the other; so that they appear to be influenced by the same wish."

This harmony in their movements, Dr. Warren thinks, is a habit formed by necessity. His further account of their habits is extremely curious:

"They always face in one direction, standing nearly side by side, and are not able, without inconvenience, to face in the opposite direction—so that one is always at the right, and the other at the left. Although not placed exactly in a parallel line, they are able to run and leap with surprising activity. On some occasions a gentleman, in sport, pursued them round the ship, when they came suddenly to the hatchway, which had been inadvertently left open. The least check would have thrown them down the hatchway, and probably killed one, or both, but they leaped over it without difficulty. They differ in intellectual vigour; the perceptions of one are more acute than those of the other, and there is a corresponding coincidence in moral qualities. He who appears most intelligent is somewhat irritable in temper, while the other's disposition is mild."

The connexion between these boys might present an opportunity for some interesting observations in regard to physiology and pathology. There is, no doubt, a network of blood-vessels and some minute nerves passing from one to the other. How far these parts are capable of transmitting the action of medicines, and of diseases, and especially what medicines and diseases, are points well worthy of consideration. Dr. W. thinks that any indisposition of one extends to the other; that they are inclined to sleep at the same time; eat about the same quantity, and perform other acts with great similarity. Both he and Mr. Hunter are of opinion that touching one of them when they are asleep, awakens both. When they are awake, an impulse given to one does not in the least affect the other. There is evidently no impression received by him who is not touched. But the opinion just mentioned is undoubtedly erroneous. The slightest movement of one is so speedily perceived by the other, as to deceive those who have not observed closely. There is no part of them which has a common perception, excepting the middle of the connecting cord, and a space near it. When a pointed instrument is applied precisely to the middle of the cord, it is felt by both, and also for about an inch on each side; beyond which the impression is limited to the individual of the side touched.

"In the function of the circulation there is a remarkable uniformity in the two bodies. The pulsations of the hearts of both coincide exactly under ordinary circumstances. I counted seventy-three pulsations in a minute while they were sitting—counting first in one boy and then in the other; I then placed my fingers on an arm of each boy, and found the pulsations take place exactly together. One of them stooping suddenly to look at my watch, his pulse became much quicker than that of the other; but after he had returned to his former posture, in about a quarter of a minute his pulse was precisely like that of the other; this happened repeatedly. Their respirations are, of consequence, exactly simultaneous."

Dr. Warren next starts a question as to their moral identity, and says—"There is no reason to doubt that the intellectual operations of the two are as perfectly distinct as those of any two individuals who might be accidentally confined together. Whether similarity of education, and identity of position as to external objects, have inspired them with any extraordinary sameness of mental action, I am unable to say—any farther, at least, than that they seem to agree in their habits and tastes." The

concluding observation is on their separation, which we may remark, appears to be to them a painful subject; for whenever it is mentioned, they weep bitterly. Dr. Warren thinks an attempt to cut the cord, or separate them, would be attended with danger, though not necessarily fatal, and as they are happy in their present state, he reasonably enough thinks such an operation uncalled for. "Should one die before the other," adds he, "they should be cut apart immediately." He, however, quotes a case from Ambrose Paré, of two girls united by the forehead, one of whom died at ten years of age, when a separation was made; and the wound of the surviving girl soon proved fatal.

From the report of Drs. Mitchill and Anderson, we collect their opinion that the band which joins these boys, has a canal with a protrusion of viscera from the abdomen of each boy, upon every effort of coughing or other exercise. The sense of feeling on the skin of this band is connected with each boy, as far as the middle of its length from his body. There can be no doubt, but that if the band was cut across at any part, a large opening would be made into the belly of each, and the wound prove fatal.

Such are the principal and most popular descriptive details of the Siamese Youths, with the substance of the reports of the American physicians who have examined them. Of course, we look with some anxiety for the opinions of the professional men of our own country. Of equal importance are the questions connected with the *minds* of the two youths, which can only be settled by continued observation. The phenomenon is altogether of the most attractive character, and will doubtless receive all the attention it deserves from our *savans*, as well as from all those who delight in witnessing the curiosities of Nature.

# CURTIUS

## A DRAMATIC SKETCH

(For the Mirror.)

**The Roman Forum.—An opening in the ground. M.  
Curtius, Soothsayers, and a vast concourse of Citizens**

*Cit.*—Place ingot upon ingot, till the mass exceed  
The bulk of Croesus' wealth, or Sardanapalus' pile.  
Let every Roman contribution bring  
An offering worthy of his house, since what  
Is valued most must in the gulf be cast,  
To save us from an overwhelming death.  
A richer treasure than the gorgeous Xerxes knew  
Will we entomb.

*Cur.*—How base the offering that were made in gold.

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