

*Question of identity. Malformation of the genital organs. Hypospadias. Error about sex by Doctor Chesnet of La Rochelle (Annals of public hygiene and legal medicine, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, t. XIV, p. 206; July 1868) – I the undersigned, doctor of medicine, living at La Rochelle (Charente-Inférieure), exposes to whoever has the right, the following: A child born of the B... couple in Saint-Jean d'Angely on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 1838 was declared to the civil status records as a girl, and although registered under the names of Adélaïde-Herculine, her parents were in the habit of calling her Alexina, a name she continued to use until now. Placed in schools for young girls and later the normal school of Charente-Inférieure, Alexina obtained a teaching certificate two years ago, and exercised the profession in a boarding school.*

Having complained of strong pains which she felt in her left groin it was decided she should undergo an examination by a doctor who could not hide, on seeing the genital organs, his surprise. He made his observations to the mistress of the boarding school, who looked to calm Alexina by telling her that what she feared was related to her constitution and that there was no reason to worry.

Alexina, however, was the subject of several remarks made by the doctor during the visit and, worrying about this mystery that surrounded her, started to pay more attention to herself than ever before. After spending every day with young girls of 15 to 16 years old, she felt emotions which she could hardly deny. More than once in the night her dreams were accompanied by indefinable sensations, she felt damp and found grey stains on her sheets in the morning as if they'd been starched. Surprised as well as alarmed, Alexina confided the new state of her soul to a clergyman who, no less surprised no doubt, engaged her to profit from a voyage she had to make to R... where her mother lived to consult Monseigneur. She presented herself to the bishopric and, following that visit, I was charged with examining Alexina with care and giving my opinion on her true sex. From this examination came the following facts:

Alexina, who is in her 22<sup>nd</sup> year, is brunette, her size is 1 metre 59 centimetres. The traits of her face are not distinguished and remain indistinct between those of a man and of a woman. Her voice is habitually one of a woman but sometimes in conversation, or with a cough, masculine tones mingle with it. A light down covers her upper lip; a few facial hairs can be seen on her cheeks, above all on the left. Her chest is that of a man; she is flat and without the appearance of breasts. She never menstruated, to the great disappointment of her mother and a doctor she consulted, who saw all his skills powerless to make this monthly flow appear. The upper limbs have nothing of the rounded forms which characterise female limbs: they are very brown and covered in a light hair, the torso and hips are those of a man.

The sub-pubic area is covered in the most abundant hair. If one parts the thighs, one sees a longitudinal fissure reaching from the sub-pubic eminence to the anus. On the upper part is a penial body, 4 to 5 centimetres long from its point of insertion to its free extremity, which has the form of a gland covered in a foreskin lightly flattened underneath and imperforated. This small member, which because of its dimensions is

as far removed from the clitoris as it is from the penis in its normal state, could, Alexina said, inflate, harden and lengthen. However, the erection proper is strongly limited, this imperfect penis finding itself held back beneath a sort of loop which only frees the gland.

The visible large labia which could be seen on either side of the fissure are very prominent, especially on the right, and covered in hairs; in reality they are only the two halves of a scrotum which is divided. In effect, on palpating these halves one manifestly feels an ovoid body suspended by the spermatic cords; the body, slightly less developed than in an adult man, appears to us to be nothing other than the testicle. On the right it is totally descended; on the left it has stayed higher; but it is mobile and more or less descends when pressed upon. These two globous bodies are very sensitive to reasonably strong pressure. According to all appearances the late passage of the testicle through the inguinal ring caused the strong pains which plagued Alexina and rendered necessary the visit to a doctor who, on learning that Alexina never menstruated, cried: "I'm pretty sure she never will."

A centimetre underneath the penis is the opening of a totally feminine urethra. I introduced a probe and let a small quantity of urine flow. The probe removed, I asked Alexina to urinate in my presence, which she did with a vigorous jet, directed horizontally from the exit of the canal. It is very probable that sperm would also be launched at a distance.

Lower than the urethra and at around 2 centimetres lower than the anus, is the orifice of a very narrow canal where I could have perhaps penetrated the extremity with my little finger if Alexina had not recoiled, suffering from pain. I introduced my probe for women and saw that this canal was about 5 centimetres long and ended in a cul-de-sac. Introducing my index finger into the anus I felt the tip of the probe through what could be called the recto-vaginal wall. This canal is therefore a sort of beginning of the vagina, at the end of which one cannot find any vestige of the uterine cervix. My finger, pushed high in the rectum, could not find the uterus through the wall of the intestine. The upper part of the buttocks and the thighs are covered with an abundance of black hairs, as with the hairiest man. What can we conclude with facts such as these? Is Alexina a woman? She has a vulva, labia, a feminine urethra independent of a sort of imperforated penis, could this not be a monstrously developed clitoris? A vagina exists, truthfully very short and very narrow, but in the end is that not still a vagina? Those are feminine attributes, yes, but Alexina never menstruated; the exterior of the body is that of a man, my explorations could not find a womb. Her tastes, her penchants, attract her to women. In the night, voluptuous sensations are followed by a spermatic flow. Her laundry is stained and starched. Furthermore, ovoid bodies and spermatic cords can be found by touching the divided scrotum. Voilà, the true witnesses of sex; we can now conclude and say: Alexina is a man, a hermaphrodite without doubt, but with an evident predominance of the masculine sex. Her story is essentially the complete reproduction of another told by M. Marc in the Dictionary of Medical Sciences under

the article HERMAPHRODITE and also cited by Orphée in the first volume of his legal medicine. Marguerite-Marie, the subject of this story, solicited, and obtained, the rectification of her sex on the registers of civil status from the courts of Dreux.