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Moritz Heinrich Romberg and Ekbohm's syndrome

As a result of four papers,^{1,2} the well known syndrome of restless legs is justly credited to KA Ekbohm Sr. His seminal paper¹ referred to "asthenia crurum paraesthetica (Irritable Legs)". His second distinguished two forms: (1) "asthenia crurum paraesthetica" and (2) "asthenia crurum dolorosa"; he later² settled for plain "restless legs syndrome". Others have referred to fidgety feet, and dyslysis. Spillane and colleagues described a similar condition of "painful legs and moving toes" relieved by sympathetic block with local anaesthetic.

Of historical interest is a passage in the English translation of the 2nd edition of Romberg's celebrated *A Manual of the Nervous Diseases of Man* (1853).³ Romberg was a great nosologist, a devotee and translator of the works of Sir Charles Bell and Marshall Hall. He provided good descriptions of, inter alia: progressive muscular atrophy, carpal tunnel syndrome, neuralgic amyotrophy and in 1846 the Parry-Romberg syndrome of progressive hemifacial atrophy. Chapter 9 includes: "Anxietas tibiaram", a sense of painful restlessness in the lower extremities, especially in the legs and feet. The patient "did not know what to do with them. . . though there was relief by change of position".

Though modern, symptomatic, empirical treatment is valuable, the aetiology remains an enigma.

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