

Society Reports

THE OSLER CLUB OF LONDON

THE annual dinner of the Club was held on 12 July 1957—the 108th anniversary of Sir William Osler's birth—at the Rembrandt Rooms, South Kensington, with the President, Dr. W. S. C. Copeman, in the chair and 108 members and visitors present. Professor Charles H. Best, C.B.E., F.R.S., M.D., delivered the 20th Oslerian Oration on 'The Discovery of Insulin'—an intimately frank, sympathetic, and moving eye-witness account which included details never told in public before. A vote of thanks to the Orator was proposed by Professor Robert Platt, F.R.C.P., and seconded by Sir Ernest Gowers. Sir Henry Dale also spoke briefly. The distinguished guests included Mrs. Charles H. Best, the Acting High Commissioner for Canada, the German, Italian, and Swiss Ambassadors, the Minister for Costa Rica, the First Secretary of the Austrian Embassy, H.E. Dr. F. T. Cheng, The Rt. Hon. the Lord Evans of Merthyr Tydfil and Lady Evans, Mr. A. P. Rowe, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Adelaide, and Dr. V. R. Khanolkar, Director, Indian Cancer Research Centre, Bombay.

At the 153rd meeting held on 4 October 1957 at the Medical Society of London, with the President in the chair, Dr. Eliot Slater of the Institute of Psychiatry, University of London, read an erudite and fascinating paper, written in collaboration with Professor Alfred Meyer, on 'The psychiatric illnesses of Handel and Schumann', and Mr. A. Dickson Wright presented a short communication, illustrated with a film, on Schumann's finger. An animated discussion followed in which a number of authorities on music took part: Mr. Frank Howes, Music Critic of *The Times*; Dr. Percy Young, Director of Music, Wolverhampton College of Technology; Mr. Arthur Benjamin; Sir Francis Cassell, Bt.; and H.E. The Austrian Chargé d'Affaires.

THE SCOTTISH SOCIETY OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

THE *Report of Proceedings of the Society for the Session 1956-7* is an attractively printed pamphlet containing much of permanent interest and value. Since its foundation in April 1948 the Society has gone from strength to strength; it now has a membership of 122 and its activities cover an ever-widening range. The pious interest of Scottish medical historians in the achievements of their countrymen and women is shown by reports of anniversary commemorations of, or the unveiling of memorials to, Mary Queen of Scots, Mungo Park, David Livingstone, James Syme, James Bridie and Sir Robert Philip. The name of Lister is associated with that of Syme on a plaque set up at the old Surgical Hospital of the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary by surgeons of Toronto, to mark the long-standing link between the Toronto and Edinburgh surgical schools.

The section entitled 'Medico-Historical Notes and Book Notices' is a wide-ranging account of historical activities of all kinds, and it includes a valuable survey of new books and journals relating to medical history.

The 27th and 28th Meetings of the Society, brief notices of which are given in the Report, have also been the subject of reports in earlier issues of *Medical History*.

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A slightly condensed text of Dr. R. A. Krause's paper, read at the 28th meeting and dealing with 'Healing as Represented on Stamps', is included; it is one of the most comprehensive and up-to-date presentations of the subject and is illustrated by two excellent plates.

At the 29th Meeting, held on 12 June 1957, Dr. John Ritchie read a paper on 'James Henrysoun, Chirurgeon to the Poore', and Dr. W. S. Mitchell one on 'Dr. George Henderson of Chirnside, 1800-1864', based on original journals which afforded interesting glimpses into the life of a country doctor of a century ago. Abstracts of both these papers are given. They will be published in full in future numbers of *Medical History*.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, KING'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL, LONDON

At the first meeting of the session on 23 July 1956, Professor John F. Fulton of Yale spoke on 'The Vision and Endeavour of Youth'. This fascinating address had special reference to the achievements of Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Vesalius and Harvey.

At a meeting on 13 November, Edmund Critchley gave a paper on Sir David Ferrier, who was associated with King's College and King's College Hospital for some thirty-eight years. In 1872 he succeeded Guy as Professor of Forensic Medicine, but by 1873 he had already started experiments on stimulation of the cerebral cortex. The paper highlighted various controversial matters: whether Ferrier was a creative experimenter or a mere copier of Fritsch and Hitzig; the controversy at the International Medical Congress of 1881 between the protagonists of cerebral localization, headed by Ferrier, and those of the holistic theory of Flourens and Goltz; the subsequent campaign of the anti-vivisectionists against Ferrier; and his role in encouraging surgeons to operate for intracranial disease.

On 28 November, R. E. Kendell read a paper on 'Andreas Vesalius, Man and Myth'. Conventionally, the *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* of Copernicus and the *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* of Vesalius, both published in 1543, are regarded as awakening science from the long sleep of the Middle Ages; but Mr. Kendell gave reasons to show that Vesalius was not more willing than his contemporaries Sylvius, Eustachius, Massa and Berengarius to break with the past. He suggested that much of the pre-eminence of the *Fabrica* over its rivals was due to the artistic genius of van Calcar, a pupil of Titian. Vesalius established his brilliance in the actual art and technique of dissection, thus inviting comparison with the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe, who provided the accurate information which led to a proper understanding of the movements of the heavenly bodies.

On 20 February 1957, Neil McIntyre gave a paper on 'Research done by Medical Students'. The range and scope of the fields covered by students seemed surprisingly wide: Paget's discovery of *Trichina spiralis* in muscle, Lister's work on the eye, and Freud's studies upon the central nervous system of fishes, to mention but a few.

At a joint meeting with the Listerian Society, Dr. F. C. Cartwright delivered his Presidential Address on 'King's College Hospital and St. John's House'. It was on the initiative of Dr. Todd that St. John's House was founded as a centre of modern methods of nursing. King's entered into an arrangement with St. John's House, but herein were planted seeds of disaster: nurses were not allowed to become sisters, and the best were removed for private nursing; the sisterhood gave way to disciplinarians and religious fanatics; in short, to Sister-Matron Aimeé Parry. For a time housemen

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were even denied access to the wards at night, and public opinion grew very bitter against the hospital; Aimeé Parry dominated everything and only the delayed effects of what amounted to criminal libel eventually removed her.

At a meeting of the Society on 20 March, Mrs. L. Sargeant introduced many of the treasures in King's College Hospital Library. She spoke of the work done by a group of students just after the war to rescue and indeed rediscover the early volumes possessed by the hospital. Among the early works presented were those of Pietro d'Argelata, Aetius of Amida, Woodall, Eustachius, Tagliacozzi, Ramazzini, Willis and Paré. First editions exhibited included Hunter's *Gravid Uterus* (1774), Casserius's *De Vocis Auditusque Organis Historia Anatomica* (1600–1), John of Vigo's *Surgery* (1514), and Lower's *Tractatus de Corde* (1669).

At the last meeting of the session on 29 May, Dr. William Brockbank gave an address on 'Some Early Anatomical Theatres'. He spoke of public dissections attended by students and laymen alike. In the Renaissance period a dissection aroused as much interest as a theatrical performance of today. He described the various types of anatomical theatres, with special reference to those of Padua and Bologna. He also described the old theatres in Leyden, Prague and London, none of which has survived.