

News, Notes and Queries

ill health. After completing the second edition of his book in 1826, he left Paris for the last time and died a few months later at his beloved Kerlouarnec.

If you leave this quiet spot and go back towards the town, you come to the church at Ploaré, where Laënnec used to worship. It is famous for its gargoyles, and when I visited it, someone was practising a Handel organ concerto. I was disappointed, however, because I could not find anything in the church connected with Laënnec. However, I think that this is typical of Breton churches. None of them contains the kind of memorials which we have in this country, although there are a great many pictures and statues of religious subjects.

From the church to the centre of Douarnenez runs the rue Laënnec downhill. About halfway is the entrance to the cemetery, and the sea can be seen in the distance. Visitors must often come to see the grave, because when I asked one of the gardeners where it was, he told me at once. You go down the road to the next entrance, turn left up the main path, and it is at the first main cross path. The stone says:

ICI REPOSENT René Théophile Hyacinthe LAËNNEC médecin de S.A.R. Mme Duchesse de Berry; docteur et Profeur Royal en médecine au Collège de France; Profeur de clinique à la Faculté de Paris de l'Academie Royale de médecine; Chevr de la lég'n d'Honneur, né à Quimper en 1781 mort à Kerlouarnec le 13 Août 1826 ET Dme Jaqte GUICHARD son épouse née à Brest en 1779 morte à Kerlouarnec le 2 Août 1847. Priez pour eux.

If you look at Douarnenez from the harbour wall, Kerlouarnec lies over the hill which faces you. Some miles away to the left lies the famous village of St. Anne la Palud where there is a Grand Pardon every August. There is an outdoor mass, partly in Breton with a sermon in French, and after lunch there is a wonderful procession. Further along the coast is the village of St. Nic Pentrez, which I hope to visit another time, because Laënnec sometimes worshipped there at a chapel dedicated to St. Cosmas and St. Damian.

REFERENCES

1. KERVRAN, ROGER, *Laënnec: His Life and Times*, Eng. trans. by D.C. Abrahams-Curiel, Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1960, p. 99.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

J. G. F. MILLER

THE HISTORY OF PHARMACY CONGRESS, ATHENS 8TH—14TH APRIL, 1967

This was the seventeenth congress of the Internationale Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Pharmazie, an active society with particularly large numbers of German (over 900) and Austrian members, but with poor support from the English-speaking world.

The 23 conference papers—to be published in the *Veröffentlichungen der Internationalen Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Pharmazie*—when heard and discussed in the space of a few days produced an impact which will certainly be missing from the printed volume of papers. It seems timely to mention the impact of the conference

in view of a recent publication, edited by A. Berman, on *Pharmaceutical Historiography*,¹ a volume which if nothing else should make every writer of pharmaceutical, medical and scientific history critically examine his own work. It is a measure of the stimulus of George Urdang, one of the founders of the *Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Pharmazie* and who may justly be called the Sigerist of pharmaceutical history,² that his three papers on historiography (published in 1927) are translated in the Berman volume. The success of the German-organized *Gesellschaft* in promoting scholarly work in history and awakening general historical interest—in large measure through its congresses—underlines the paucity of interest in this country.

A most conspicuous feature of the Athens conference was the papers, many from Roumania, dealing with the study of medical folklore and *materia medica* (even proprietary remedies) as aids to modern drug research. This feature led to a suggestion for an international symposium on the subject, a suggestion which could well have arisen from the feeling that more careful use of historical techniques is needed in this large, difficult area of study.

Most of the remaining papers were concerned with the professional aspects of pharmacy, e.g. pharmaceutical education, technology, and literature. As with most international conferences the variety of papers provided a salutary reminder about a too chauvinistic approach to history. One point discussed in *Pharmaceutical Historiography* seems especially pertinent to the Congress—the relationship between the amateur and the professional historian both as writers and readers³. Possibly because of a time limit of 15–20 minutes the congress papers dealt largely with collating facts rather than interpretation. Although the papers were of undoubted value, for facts must of course come before interpretation (and additionally many of them included superb illustrations too numerous to be published) their lack of interpretation restricted discussion and hence limited their conference value. This seemed especially disappointing with an audience—as at most medical and pharmaceutical history conferences—which included many who generally have little contact with the academic historian.

The stimulus of the conference sessions alone made the Congress an unqualified success. But numerous additional features helped to make it altogether a memorable occasion; for example, the Greek hospitality including a gift of a handsome plaque bearing a design based on aspects of Minoan medicine. Add to this the conference excursions, one being to the famous ruined Temple of Aesculapius at Epidaurus, and it can be appreciated that perspective was persistently injected into the conference proceedings which dealt mainly with the seventeenth century to the present day.

Space does not allow mention of many incidents of a bustling week save for the participation of students in the Congress. This was undoubtedly due to the enthusiasm of the Congress organiser, Professor Kritikos, and provided a splendid reminder of the value in having an enthusiastic historian among students of pharmacy and medicine.

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¹ Madison, 1967. (Proceedings of a colloquium sponsored by the American Institute of the History of Pharmacy on the Occasion of the Institute's 25th Anniversary.)

² Interesting light on the relation between Sigerist and Urdang occurs in *Pharmaceutical Historiography*, p. 121.

³ *Pharmaceutical Historiography*, various pages of the discussion, pp. 117–140.