

THE NORWEGIAN SOCIETY
FOR THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

(Norsk Medisinsk-Historisk Forening)

At a meeting of the Society held in Oslo on 8 March 1957, Professor Ernst Schjøtt-Rivers presented a survey of the history of midwifery forceps. The speaker gave many interesting details of the Chamberlen dynasty, three members of which bore the name of Peter and two that of Hugh. There seemed little doubt that Peter Chamberlen the elder invented the forceps, and that the discovery was kept as a family secret by his successors. The conflict between William Smellie and Jean Palfyn, who devised the so-called *Mains de Palfyn* consisting of two steel spoons, was vividly described. The speaker also made some interesting remarks regarding other surgical and obstetrical instruments, and he painted a vivid picture of general, cultural, and medical conditions in the time of the Chamberlens.

It was announced that the speaker at the next meeting of the Society, to be held at the beginning of May, would be Dr. Hugh Clegg, Editor of the *British Medical Journal*.

BERNH. GETZ

THE OSLER CLUB OF LONDON

THE 148th meeting of the Club was held on 26 March 1957, at the Medical Society of London, with the President, Dr. W. S. C. Copeman, in the chair, and a record number of over one hundred members and visitors attending. Tributes to Sir Geoffrey Keynes, who had been elected a 'Friend of the Osler Club' as long ago as 1928, and who celebrated his seventieth birthday the day before the meeting, were paid by Dr. A. W. Franklin, Sir Gordon Gordon-Taylor, Sir Harry Platt, President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, Sir Charles Read, President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, Sir Clement Price-Thomas, President of the Royal Society of Medicine, and Mr. A. F. Johnson, President of the Bibliographical Society. On behalf of the Club the President presented Sir Geoffrey Keynes with his portrait by Mr. Gilbert Spencer, A.R.A., who was present. Sir Geoffrey replied briefly.

Dr. A. H. T. Robb-Smith read a breezy communication on 'St. Cosmas and St. Damian', which included several delightful Oslerian and Keynesian touches. Sir Russell Brock followed with a paper on 'The History of Cardiac Surgery', which referred to Théodore Tuffier's courageous and visionary, but pathetic, attempt in 1913 at valvotomy for aortic stenosis, and almost

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casually mentioned his own pioneer contributions. A vote of thanks to Sir Russell was proposed by Sir Henry Souttar and seconded by Sir Zachary Cope.

ROYAL SOCIETY OF MEDICINE

Section of the History of Medicine

AT a meeting of the Section held on 6 March, Professor F. G. Young, F.R.S., of the Department of Biochemistry, University of Cambridge, spoke on 'Glycogen, 1857-1957'.

The observations which led Claude Bernard to the discovery that sugar is liberated in the liver (the glycogenic function of the liver) were discussed. The subsequent discovery that the immediate source of the sugar was glycogen in the liver was then considered. Criticisms, in part justified, of Claude Bernard's methods led Pavy and others to reject the idea of the glycogenic function of the liver, and assert that the liver stores carbohydrate in the form of glycogen as a protection against the harmful effects of large amounts of sugar in the blood. That Bernard was right and Pavy was wrong was only finally proved by hepatectomy, first carried out by F. C. Mann and his colleagues in 1920.

Claude Bernard's doubts as to whether sugar in the blood was converted directly to glycogen in the liver were discussed, and the confusing effect of the views of Pflüger and others was brought out.

During the past twenty-five years, the chemistry of the glycogen molecule has been completely elucidated, and as the result of the work of Cori and her colleagues, the metabolic inhomogeneity of the molecule revealed. Enzymic methods of dissecting the glycogen molecule have led to the differentiation of glycogen storage disease into a number of forms, and has revealed the enzymic basis of some of them.

AT a meeting held on 3 April, Mr. T. B. Layton read a paper on 'Horace Walpole's Quinsey'. This episode occurred when Walpole was making the grand tour of Europe in company with Thomas Gray, the future poet. In the early summer of 1741, when the two friends were at Reggio, some misunderstanding arose and they parted company. Shortly after this Walpole suffered from a severe attack of 'quinsey'—or rather, as Mr. Layton thought, from a pharyngitis arising from bad sanitation and from mental depression owing to his quarrel with Gray. For some hours his life was considered to be in danger, but he recovered under the care of a physician who was summoned from Florence by Joseph Spence.

At the same meeting Dr. T. J. Rendle-Short read a paper on 'Worms in History with special reference to Children'.