

# *Society Reports*

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## SECTION OF MEDICAL HISTORY IN THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (VICTORIAN BRANCH)

A MEETING of the section was held in the Medical Society Hall, 426 Albert Street, East Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, on Monday 17 March, at 8.15 p.m.

Miss Ann Williams read a paper on Dr. L. L. Smith, a colourful character who practised medicine in Melbourne in the latter part of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century.

Miss Williams began her paper by tracing Dr. Smith's life from his birth in 1830, through his graduation as Licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries in 1851, and his arrival in Australia in 1852. This was the era of the gold rush in Victoria, and Smith practised for a time on the goldfields, but later set up practice in Melbourne. Throughout his career he carried out many practices which were quite common in those days, but would not be acceptable in the profession today. He advertised regularly in the press and by every other available means, but made a virtue of this by stating that his advertising was open and that he was not hypocritical about it. He said that the very people who criticized him also advertised, but they did so more subtly by maintaining ostentatious dwellings and carriages, and by keeping themselves well before the public eye at social functions.

He lectured extensively to the public and produced a number of books, pamphlets and journals which he distributed freely. He advertised and sold 'patent' medicines and pills. Politically he was an Independent Liberal with radical views, and was elected to the Victorian Legislative Assembly as Member for South Burke. His hobbies were his model farms and breeding race-horses. In spite of his faults he was a man of remarkable energy and enterprise.

## THE SCOTTISH SOCIETY OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

### *Thirtieth Meeting and Ninth Annual General Meeting*

THE thirtieth meeting and ninth annual general meeting of the Society was held on 18 October 1957 in the library of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, Mr. A. L. Goodall, the President, in the chair. The Annual Report of the Society for 1956-7 was presented and unanimously adopted. Mr. Goodall, on his demitting office as President, thanked the Society for its support during his term, and called for nominations for his successor. Dr. W. S. Mitchell, Librarian to King's College Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, was proposed, seconded and unanimously elected. After taking the chair, Dr. Mitchell thanked the Society for the honour conferred on him, remarking that he was the first non-medical occupant of the office of President. He paid tribute to Mr. Goodall and to Dr. John Ritchie, a former President and founder member, who demitted all office in the Society.

Dr. Douglas Guthrie then addressed the meeting, taking as his subject 'Holland and Scotland in Medical Partnership'. Describing how William the Silent was doubtless surprised when, as a reward for the services rendered to him by the people of

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Leyden, they chose a university rather than the alternative offered by William, a remission of taxes for ten years. He would have been more surprised if he had known how profoundly the newly established university was destined to guide the advance of medical learning. Founded in 1575 and staffed by teachers who had studied at Padua, Leyden University attracted students of all nations, most of them students of medicine. There were many English-speaking students and about one-quarter of them were Scottish, this proportion rising to almost one-third early in the eighteenth century when Hermann Boerhaave was the leading teacher. Among his pupils were Alexander Monro, *primus*, and four others from Edinburgh who, on their return home, became professors and constituted the first Faculty of Medicine there in 1726. But the Leyden influence was not only strong at Edinburgh; it extended to Glasgow and to Aberdeen.

### *Thirty-first Meeting*

The thirty-first ordinary meeting of the Society was held on 26 April 1958 at the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. As this was the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the Society, the first meeting having been held at the Royal College of Surgeons on 23 April 1948, it was decided to have an informal luncheon to precede the meeting, and Dr. W. S. Mitchell, the President, presided over a gathering of some forty members and guests. After the luncheon Dr. Mitchell briefly reviewed the activities of the Society over the last ten years, highlighting some of the more notable events during that period.

Following this happy little function, the Society was constituted for its meeting proper at which Dr. Mitchell delivered his presidential address, taking as his subject Dr. William Bullein, Elizabethan physician and author. Most of our knowledge of Bullein's life came from scraps of information contained in his various works, which were *The Government of Healthe* (1558); *The Bulwarke of Defence* (1562); *A Comfortable Regiment against the Pleurisi* (1562); and *Regiment against the Fever Pestilence* (1564). Bullein was born some time about the middle of the reign of Henry VIII and died in London on 7 January 1575–6. He served for a time as physician to Sir Thomas Hilton, Captain of Tynemouth Castle, whose widow he married.

Bullein wrote his *Bulwarke* in prison. It is really four works in one, and contains *The Book of Simples*, one of the earliest English herbals, the illustrations of which are obviously based on those in Fuchs's *De Historia Stirpium* of 1542. The *Regiment against the Fever Pestilence*, inspired by the London epidemic of 1563, is a series of dialogues designed to give not only bodily relief but also spiritual comfort in time of pestilence.

Bullein's works, which have been unjustly neglected, are still worth perusing not only for the picture of the author and his times which they afford, but for the racy English (including a few examples of what was later to be known as 'Euphuism') in which they were written.

## NORWEGIAN SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

THE Society held the last meeting of the current session on 17 April 1958 when Professor Robin Fåhraeus, M.D., of the University of Uppsala, spoke on the Swedish anatomist, botanist, architect, composer and philosopher Olaus Rudbeck, who was born in Vesterås, Sweden, in 1630 and died in 1702.

Rudbeck studied at Leyden and was appointed professor of anatomy at Uppsala