

Society Reports

A meeting of the Society, jointly with the Trinity College Medical Society, was held in the Lecture Theatre of the Department of Radiotherapeutics at 8.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 8 November 1960, with Dr. P. A. Tyser, President, in the Chair. Mr. A. Rocyn-Jones, F.R.C.S., delivered a lecture on 'The Early History of British Orthopaedic Surgery'. The speaker described the dual origin of orthopaedic surgery in Britain. W. J. Little, a physician, and himself a cripple, was responsible for the establishment of the first special orthopaedic hospital. Hugh Owen Thomas, general practitioner in Liverpool, and direct descendant of hereditary bone-setters in Anglesey, brought the traditions of the craft, many of them valuable, into regular medicine. The speaker also mentioned James of Exeter, another pioneer, who is less well remembered than he deserves, and the immensely valuable work of Robert Jones. In the course of the discussion Professor H. A. Harris emphasized the importance of the contributions of Celts to medicine. Mr. David Williams, Secretary of Trinity College Medical Society, proposed a vote of thanks.

SECTION OF MEDICAL HISTORY IN THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (Victorian Branch)

THE annual meeting of the Section of Medical History was held on Monday, 11 April 1960, in the Medical Society Hall, 426 Albert Street, East Melbourne, Victoria.

Office Bearers for 1960

President: Sir William Johnston.

Honorary Secretary: Dr. M. L. Verso.

Honorary Treasurer: Dr. J. Hueston.

Ex Officio Member of Committee: Dr. Bryan Gandevia (Curator of the Museum of The Medical Society of Victoria).

At the conclusion of the business portion of the meeting Dr. O'Sullivan presented a paper entitled 'In the Path of Osler' which took the form of a travelogue in which Dr. O'Sullivan showed photographs of places he had visited and with which Osler had been associated. The first series of photographs dealt with Montreal, and an account was given of the Osler Library and the work of Dr. W. W. Francis, whose recent death had been a sad blow to his many Oslerian friends. Next, dealing with Boston, Dr. O'Sullivan showed photographs of several medical centres, particularly the Joseph H. Pratt Diagnostic Hospital whose founder, Dr. Pratt, had been a pupil of Osler. A tour of the Old Blockley Museum in Philadelphia and of Johns Hopkins Hospital, completed the discussion of the American period.

The Oxford period was covered by scenes of the University and Ewelme, and of the 'Open Arms', Osler's residence, as it is today. Some slides of Edinburgh showed electioneering slogans from the Rectorial elections of 1908 still visible today above a shop in Lindsay Place.

Dr. O'Sullivan had arranged a display of his collection of Osleriana for the occasion.

At a meeting held on Monday, 25 June, a paper was presented by Dr. Rachel Jakobowicz, entitled 'The Hippocratic Tradition in Nineteenth Century German Medicine', which dealt with the trends that were to be seen in German Medicine during the last century. The speaker pointed out that in the period from 1800 to 1840, which was known as the *Romantic Period*, all German thinking, including medical

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thinking, had a bias towards romanticism. Despite the realization of the futility of the philosophical systems of the eighteenth century, the discoveries that had been made in the basic sciences had not yet influenced the practice of medicine. Diagnosis still depended on unaided observation while treatment was aimed at aiding the healing powers of Nature, for, to the romantic, nature was divine. Men spoke of the priesthood of medicine and a high value was placed on medical ethics.

In the *Interim Period* from 1840 to 1860 it became possible to express disease in terms of changes detectable by precise chemical and physical methods, but doctors reacted in various ways to the new discoveries. Some accepted them wholeheartedly and tended to regard practice as simply science carried to the bedside. Others, still influenced by the romantic movement, based their practice on a religiously tinted biology and pathology. Others again opposed both scientific and speculative approaches and relied on experience. On the whole, practising doctors realized that there was more to medicine than the mere application of science and that it was a personal art.

The trends in the *Scientific Period*, which extended from about 1860 to the turn of the century, were again a facet of the general cultural life of the country. Medicine was regarded as an applied science and measurable reproducible accuracy was demanded. Nevertheless the bulk of practising doctors appreciated the fact that the primary aim of medicine was not scientific investigation but the welfare of the patient. It still remained an art. Thus, throughout a century of revolutionary change, the Hippocratic tradition remained the backbone of medical practice in Germany.

NORWEGIAN SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

At a meeting of the Society held at the Damms Bokhus in Oslo on 3 November 1960, Professor Kristian Kristiansen was elected President of the Society in succession to Professor Axel Stroem, who had held that office since the foundation of the Society in 1956. The other members of the Committee are Drs. Nic. Aa. Sverre, Eiler H. Schiottz, Jan H. Solem and Bernhard Getz. The membership has just passed one hundred.

Hans Gabriel Dedichen gave a talk entitled 'Chlorosis and the Corset'. In the course of his fascinating lecture, he showed how chlorosis or the 'green-sickness' had been extremely common during the time that tight lacing was in fashion, and how it had disappeared with the adoption of more rational attire by young women.

Stian W. Erichsen spoke about 'Radesyken', a chronic skin disease occurring in Southern Norway in the latter part of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century. Radesyken seems to have been a manifestation of syphilis, but it was, until about 1850, regarded as being a form of leprosy. The speaker also gave some interesting information about the early development of Norwegian hospitals and health services.

Finally Dr. Kristiansen expressed the thanks of the members to Dr. Stroem for all that he had done for the Society during his term of office as President.

BERNHARD GETZ