

News, Notes and Queries

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE, MADRID 1956

THE Fifteenth International Congress of the History of Medicine was announced to be held at Madrid and Salamanca from 22 to 29 September, and was to be followed by an excursion to Andalusia. This was promising fare, for Spain is rich in academic institutions dating from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. I also had at the back of my mind the excellent arrangements and fabulous hospitality which marked the Congress of 1935.

It may be confidently asserted that this Fifteenth Congress was a great success, though changes in social and economic conditions made comparisons invidious and impossible. The Congress was presided over extremely well by Professor Dr. Pedro Laín Entralgo of the University of Madrid, and many favourable comments were passed on his graceful speeches and his general helpfulness. The general secretarial work was under the supervision of Dr. Silverio Palafox, who discharged his duties well. The scientific meetings of the Congress were all held in the Instituto de Cultura Hispanica, a fine new institute in the resurgent university city.

The programme contained the titles of 166 papers. These were arranged in four divisions: I. The Iberian Peninsula and Arabian Medicine; II. Medical relations between the Iberian countries and the rest of Europe; III. Medical iconography in the sixteenth century; IV. Miscellaneous subjects. As forty-three of these communications were classified in the first three divisions, it was possible to conduct the scientific sessions using only two lecture-rooms. Each day started with an important and lengthy communication attended by all the members, after which the reading of papers continued in the two rooms concurrently. In this note it can only be said that most of the papers were interesting, and that some reached a high standard. The time factor is always a difficulty on these occasions; the organizers kept this well in hand, though a very interesting lecture of an hour and three-quarters by the distinguished president of the International Society must have caused them some concern. The Faculty of Medicine of the University of Madrid put up a very impressive exhibition of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century medical works.

The excursion to the Escorial was noteworthy, and the excellence of the manuscripts displayed there was a strong temptation to lag behind the crowd. Owing to unforeseeable accommodation difficulties the closing visit to Salamanca had to be abandoned. Instead, the closing ceremony took

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place in the remarkable hall of the former University of Alcalá de Henares. That final day was rounded off by a banquet at which the proceedings were marked by dignity and restraint. The Congress was altogether a memorable occasion.

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NEWS FROM SCOTLAND

A REPORT on the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Scottish Society of the History of Medicine held on 12 October 1956 is given above. Reference may here be made to the published *Reports of Proceedings for the Session 1955-56*, a well-printed pamphlet of thirty-four pages which provides further evidence of the enthusiasm and energy with which the history of medicine is being cultivated in Scotland. The membership of the Society now stands at well over one hundred and new adherents continue to be recruited. The *Report of Proceedings* includes a useful survey of medico-historical events and publications in 1955-56 as well as the full text of papers on 'Some Peeblesshire Doctors, with Special Reference to Mungo Park', by the Rev. Dr. A. M. Gillespie; on 'John Goodsir', by Dr. Hugh W. Y. Taylor; and on 'The Maladies of Mary Queen of Scots and her Husbands', by Dr. M. H. Armstrong Davison—all extremely interesting and well-documented studies.

In February 1956 the Society held a special luncheon party in celebration of the seventieth birthday of Dr. Douglas Guthrie, its founder and first president. Mr. A. L. Goodall, the President, paid tribute to Dr. Guthrie as a man, and as a medical historian, and spoke appreciatively of the great work he had done and continued to do for the Society. He then presented Mrs. Guthrie with a suitably inscribed and bound volume of the Society's Annual Reports and reprinted papers as a tangible token of the Society's great affection for her husband. In May 1956 Dr. Guthrie retired from the post of Lecturer on the History of Medicine in the University of Edinburgh, an office which he had held with great distinction for eleven years. By his work on behalf of the Scottish Society of the History of Medicine, his lectures and demonstrations at Edinburgh University, his numerous writings and world-wide travels, and by his infectious enthusiasm for his subject, Dr. Guthrie has contributed enormously to the present-day interest in medico-historical studies. It is very gratifying to his numerous friends and admirers that Dr. Guthrie has been elected President of the Section of History of Medicine of the Royal Society of Medicine for the Session 1956-57. His Presidential Address on 6 February 1957 will deal with the timely subject of 'A Renaissance of Medical History?'