

THE NEW ACADEMIC YEAR

CHARING CROSS HOSPITAL MEDICAL SCHOOL

In presiding at the inauguration of the new session at Charing Cross Hospital Medical School on October 10, Lord INMAN announced that within the past few days the contract had been signed for the site of the new "Charing Cross" at Northwick Park, near Harrow. Forty-seven acres, he said, had been acquired, of which just upon 34 acres would be used for the hospital and the remainder for the medical school. Thanks to Professor Vines and his colleagues on the planning committee, the plans were all ready, and Lord Inman hoped that it would not be long before the economic position of the country would enable a start to be made on the new scheme.

The Educated Man with a Vocation

A witty inaugural address was delivered by Lord ELTON, after Lady Elton had distributed the prizes. He remarked that the students were in a borderland in the sense that they were both continuing their education and embarking on their career. When he and his fellow students had left Oxford or Cambridge or London they thought they knew all the answers; now they knew that they were just beginning to understand the questions. Lord Elton defined the hallmark of the educated man as possession of the art of readily perceiving the relevant in any complex of facts. The sifting of the relevant from the less relevant was the fundamental intellectual process of any profession. The effective doctor was the one who most accurately detected among many symptoms the one which was of chief importance.

Their patients, he reminded his listeners, were not merely a physical structure. A patient would be a spirit for infinitely longer than he would be a body. Spirit and body acted upon each other, and he was convinced that it was the spirit which exercised supreme control. He had seen many of his colleagues who had died because—whatever their death certificate might have said—they were no longer interested in life. Duodenal ulcer had been found to be due to a person permitting his ego to become too central in his universe. Lord Elton thought that medicine would make more discoveries of this kind.

The really valuable lessons of school and college were the lessons which the student did not know he had learnt and which his teachers did not know they had taught him. Lord Elton hoped that the students would find out that they had a vocation. "Vocation" meant a calling in the strictest and deepest sense; a man received a call from beyond life, as Paul received a call on the road to Damascus. Happiness was a result of performing one's true function; it could never be won by deliberate seeking. A man who had a vocation would always be happy, because his work would release him from the unconscious torment of over-preoccupation with himself.

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON NUTRITIONAL RESEARCH

In 1946 delegates from many parts of Europe were invited to London, under the auspices of the Nutrition Society and the British Council, to report on the food shortages experienced by their countries during the war. At this conference the formation of an International Union between the nutrition societies of various lands was proposed, and it was left to Dr. L. J. HARRIS to bring it into existence. Business meetings were convened in various parts of the world, and the approval of the United Nations Organization for the project was obtained. A further impetus to international co-operation has now been given by a second scientific conference on "Present Problems in Nutritional Research," organized at Basle from October 1-4 by Professor F. VERZAR and attended by 150 delegates from 18 countries. The discussion dealt with the physiology and biochemistry of nutri-

tion, food production and consumption, the control of food adulteration, and the roles of proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals in nutrition.

Food Production and Consumption

Professor A. I. VIRTANEN (Helsinki) discussed the importance of agriculture in providing for the world's increasing population. In America experiments had been made on the production of proteins, carbohydrates, and fats by means of rapidly growing algae. Much could still be gained, however, by the improved cultivation of land plants. In Ireland, for example, the damp climate was unsuitable for hay-making. As in many other parts of Europe the nutrition of cows and the production of milk could be much improved by making silage, for which he had devised an effective method. Dr. J. TRÉMOLIÈRES (Paris) produced statistics showing that the consumption of foodstuffs in different parts of France varied greatly between districts and between early records and more recent observations. The physiology of digestion in the ruminant, the fundamental basis for the production of milk, beef, and mutton, was described by Dr. D. P. CUTHBERTSON (Aberdeen). Remarkable data on the effect of diet on muscular stamina were reported by Professor H. KRAUT. In groups of German workers or students stamina was subnormal when the diet provided less than about 1 g. of protein per kg. of body weight daily. Professor E. J. BIGWOOD (Brussels) described the analysis of dietary proteins into their constituent amino-acids by means of chromatography on ion-exchange resins. Professor K. LANG (Mainz) described the causes of the loss in nutritive value which occurs when proteins are stored or strongly heated with sugars.

Interesting papers were given by Professor E. ABRAMSON (Sweden) and Professor O. HÖGL (Bern) on the control of the adulteration and sophistication of foods. The inauguration of a central laboratory for the investigation of the toxicity of chemicals used in food manufacture, and for sanctioning the use of chemicals proved harmless, was strongly advocated. Mr. A. L. BACHARACH (London), however, considered that the best safeguard was the caution and integrity of advisory food chemists, backed by the accumulated knowledge of their organizations. Dr. W. R. AYKROYD described the origin of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Dietary Constituents

Investigations have long been in progress in Germany on the possibility of converting paraffin wax and various waste materials into fats suitable for food. Professor K. THOMAS (Göttingen) explained the effect of the presence of methyl groups and of branched chains on the metabolism of these products. Dr. A. SCHURCH described the isolation of a toxic fraction from heated linseed oil, which had been used in America for cooking purposes when adequate supplies of other fat had not been available. According to Professor K. BERNHARD (Basle) the alcohol phytol, a component of chlorophyll, resembles choline in preventing the accumulation of excessive fat in the liver. Professor A. B. L. BEZNAK (Birmingham) described the effect of fat in diets low in vitamin B₁ on the growth of rats both when rested and when exercised.

Dr. L. J. HARRIS (Cambridge) spoke on the practical significance of vitamins in relation to national health policy, with special reference to British experiences in the war and since. He considered vitamin D to be the most important vitamin in this country, as indicated by the decrease in the incidence of rickets since the existence of the vitamin was realized soon after the first world war. From data on food consumption it might be deduced that there had been considerable increases in the intakes of vitamins B₁, C, riboflavin, and nicotinamide between 1939 and 1947. In Britain reliance was placed on a surprisingly small number of foods for the supply of the necessary vitamins. Thus much of our vitamin B₁ came from bread, and the adoption of a high rate of extraction had greatly increased our intake. Vitamin D was derived mainly from vitaminized margarine and

from cod-liver oil. The improving health of the community was reflected in greater weight and height gains in children, and by diminishing mortality and morbidity rates. Professor H. DAM (Copenhagen) gave a full account of the numerous effects of vitamin-E deficiency in various animals, and outlined the complicated interrelationships between the vitamin and other nutrients. Thus cod-liver oil could oppose the action of vitamin E, and could influence the nature of the lesions sustained in avitaminosis. Dr. T. MOORE (Cambridge) gave further evidence on Dam's interesting discovery that the dye-stuff methylene blue has some degree of vitamin-E activity. He found that it could protect rats fully against some of the abnormalities caused by vitamin-E deficiency but not against others. Dr. I. LEITCH asked whether Professor Dam considered that there was any danger of cod-liver oil being toxic in children, as had already been found in calves. He replied that in his opinion tocopherol should be added to cod-liver oil as a precaution.

Communications on mineral metabolism were given by Professors H. CREMER (Mainz), V. DEMOLE (Lausanne), T. GORDONOFF, and A. J. HELD. Differences in opinion were expressed on the desirability of adding fluorine to food-stuffs to give protection against the dental caries which is very prevalent in Switzerland. It was held by some speakers that this step might disturb a balance between fluorine and iodine and increase the incidence of thyroid diseases. In discussing the role of hormones in food production Dr. S. J. FOLLEY (Reading) mentioned the influence of iodized casein or thyroxine on the production of milk. He also dealt with the sex hormones, which may be used *inter alia* to caponize cockerels, and with the pituitary hormones. Dr. S. G. GREENBERG (U.S.A.) spoke on the effects of cortisone in decreasing the efficiency of the utilization of food.

The next congress arranged by the International Union of Nutritional Sciences will be held in Amsterdam in the summer of 1954.

THE LAKE DISTRICT MOUNTAIN ACCIDENT COMMITTEE

The development of the Lake District National Park has attracted an increasing number of inexperienced walkers to the area. In consequence there has been an increase in the number of mountain accidents and in the number of persons reported missing on the fells. Over many years there has been a gradual development of first-aid and mountain rescue posts, pioneered by the various climbing organizations, situated almost exclusively in the main rock-climbing areas. These posts are excellently equipped and in addition there are two organized mountain rescue teams based on Conistone and Keswick.

Analysis of recent accidents has shown that an increasing proportion of casualties are drawn from the ranks of fell walkers and hikers as distinct from rock climbers, and it is now locally considered desirable that the provision of first-aid and rescue facilities should be extended to all valleys in the National Park which are at present without them. The aim is to ensure that into whatever valley a person may descend for help there may he find equipment readily available and at least a nucleus of local dalesmen trained in its use.

To achieve this aim a committee has been set up, provisionally named the Lake District Mountain Accident Committee, with representation from the main climbing, rambling, hostel, and holiday organizations, the police, the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John, the local county district councils, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, the Joint Committee on Mountain Accidents, and the Royal Air Force Mountain Rescue Service. The medical officer of health of the combined county districts of Westmorland was appointed the first chairman. The functions of the new committee will be threefold: (1) to co-ordinate and extend the present arrangements for first aid and rescue in mountain accidents of all

types; (2) to co-ordinate and improve the arrangements for searching for persons reported missing on the fells; (3) to foster and encourage preventive measures against these accidents.

Search Parties

There have been many recent accidents in which shock and exposure have been material factors in the cause of death. It is felt that lives will be saved and suffering relieved by speedy location of the patient, prompt and adequate first-aid and shock treatment on the site, followed by gentle removal from the fellside to the waiting ambulance in the valley below. Arrangements for searching for persons missing on the fells need improving, because many of the recent fatal cases have been found many miles from where they were presumed to be. Not only must search be made over a wider area, but it must be started more promptly if lives are to be saved during the vital initial 24 hours. It is planned to form additional organized search parties both within the National Park and in the areas within easy travelling distance, and to make fuller use of the extensive resources of the Royal Air Force Mountain Rescue Unit for this purpose, all in close co-operation with the police authorities.

THE HARVEIAN ORATION LORD MORAN ON QUACKERY

Lord MORAN delivered the Harveian Oration at the Royal College of Physicians on October 17. The title of the oration was "Into the Past."

Lord Moran began by reminding his audience that the College had been founded by Henry VIII in 1518 primarily to suppress the swarm of unlicensed practitioners and quacks who were then infesting the country. The war between the College and the quacks had lasted for more than two centuries. In it the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge were non-combatants, and the Court and Church and State were in the main on the side of the quacks. It was not, however, the strength of the opposition that had daunted the College. It had other troubles. For one thing, in trying to unravel the web of human credulity the College was not helped by the fact that people were completely in the dark about how the mind worked—and that was still true at the present time. For another, there was a bit of the quack in most folk, and the College knew, when it set out to change human nature, that it was not likely to suffer from unemployment.

Why People Go to Quacks

Perhaps the College went about things the wrong way. Certainly it showed more aptitude for repressive measures than for getting down to the root of the trouble. No one apparently gave much thought to the task of undermining the hold of the quack on the public mind. After all, why did people go to quacks? It was not reason that took them there, for the College case was unanswerable. It was simply this: that if a man was going to practise as a doctor he should first be trained as such. People went to a quack because they thought he was better than a doctor. He did things and they were impressed.

The only remedy was to teach the public what a good doctor could do. More than one president had tried to wean the public—and sometimes the profession—of their pathetic faith in physical activity, in a doctor who did things, in the giving of a bottle of medicine. William Pitcairn had said that the last thing the physician learnt was when to do nothing, when to leave things to time and Nature. He had pointed out that a popular doctor was not necessarily a good doctor. Nevertheless a popular doctor often helped his patients because he was usually a sound psychologist. There was nothing wrong in that. In trying to make Medicine a science they should never forget that it was also an art. A physician ideally should be both a scientist and an artist.