MEDICAL SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF VENEREAL DISEASES

Meeting in Dublin—May 29 and 30, 1964

It is becoming a habit for the Society to hold an out-of-town meeting in the summer, and the members who went to Dublin at the end of May will agree that it is a habit to be encouraged. Those of us already familiar with the fair city found it had lost none of its charm, and those who for the first time were seeing its streets, broad and narrow, took to it at once, appreciating its beauty (singular, please, Mr Editor!) and tuning in so well to the mellifluous music of the national tongue that by the last day more than one lady member had acquired a bit of a brogue.

The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland kindly put their imposing premises at our disposal, and all the sessions—professional and social—were held there. At the first of these tribute was paid to Colonel L. W. Harrison, whose death had made us all conscious of a sense of loss, although naturally it was the older members who most mourned the passing of a dear and much respected friend. His successor at the Ministry of Health, Dr G. L. M. McElligott, emerged from his retirement in radiant health and, with his wife, entertained us on the first evening. He also took part in the discussions following the numerous papers. There is no need to detail them here for some of them appear later in these pages; the contributions of the venereologist speakers were, for the most part, commendably brief. This year the sociological side, save for one not very convincing contribution, was little in evidence, and laboratory themes were agreeably interspersed with papers on clinical subjects.

While acknowledging the indebtedness of venereologists to pathologists and serologists, one speaker referred to the growing tendency to rely overmuch on laboratory findings, and said that the treponema immobilization test was in danger of becoming regarded as a "sacred cow". It was refreshing to hear another authority insist that diagnosis must ultimately be determined by clinical judgement, and that the therapist must not allow himself to be stampeded into a decision in conflict with the symptoms observed, even if confronted by a whole herd of "sacred cows".

At the Society's dinner on the second evening, Dr R. D. Catterall, in a graceful speech, expressed our appreciation of the presence of two eminent Dublin medical men and their wives, Mr T. Millin and Professor R. B. Pringle, the respective Presidents of the Royal College of Surgeons and the Royal College of Physicians. At the three previous summer meetings of the MSSVD—in Copenhagen, Edinburgh, and Paris—the venereologists of those cities took a prominent part in the proceedings; and at Dublin there were participants from England, Wales, Scotland, Denmark, and France, but none from Eire. Could it be that in this emerald Eden the forbidden fruit is untainted and that, as with snakes, there are no spirochaetes in Ireland?

R.F.
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