

MEDICAL SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF VENEREAL DISEASES

Meeting in Copenhagen—June 5 to 9, 1963

The summer meeting of the Society provided the opportunity for some fifty members from the United Kingdom to gather in Copenhagen, where they met specialists from many other European countries, who, irrespective of political or economic groupings, have in common the "market" that maintains the supply of patients and the demand for the services of venereologists.

In the planning and carrying out of a very varied programme, we had the benefit of the co-operation of the Danish Society for Dermatology and Venereology, and of the European Office of the International Union against the Venereal Diseases and Treponematoses. The Union met in Copenhagen in 1948, and this year's M.S.S.V.D. meeting there made it possible for some of us to renew friendships that had started 15 years ago.

Although many of the papers, which are published in this issue of the *Journal*, dealt with clinical and laboratory themes, this year's meeting focused attention on venereal infection in young people; and the discussions on these social aspects of the subject were of sufficient public interest to be televised.

It is manifestly right and proper that venereologists should study all the factors that contribute to the spread of infection: but it was perhaps well that the author of one paper brought us back to the crux of the matter. He ended by showing on the screen, a picture of a sailor, who, proud of his promiscuous performances, had allowed a not so literate tattooist to embellish his arm with the words "I love every girls".

The poet is apt to glamourize the life of the sailor, but it may be said in defence of Robert Louis Stevenson that, in his day, relatively little was known of the epidemiology of luetic and Neisserian infections. Readers who remember his *Requiem* will recall how, knowing he was dying, he wrote of laying himself down with a will: and then, metaphorically, he continued:

Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.

It is doubtful if R.L.S. could have guessed how dire the effects may be upon the health of women when the sailor, home from sea, lays himself down with a

will. The sailor's home-coming, too, often makes it necessary for the venereologist to turn hunter; and the hunt is likely to be more successful if—as was stressed by Hungarian workers—international contact-tracing can be made effective. Those members of the Society who visited the seaward parts of Copenhagen by night needed no reminder of how sea-ports contribute to the difficulties of contact-tracing and effective treatment.

Most of the papers were read in the delightful premises of *Domus Medica*; but the world-famous Serum Institute was visited, and Dr. Alice Reyn, in her words of welcome, recalled that the building in which we lunched had been used in the early days of the Institute to house the horses required for the making of antitoxin. At least one of the company felt it was not an inappropriate meeting-place for those who were devoting their lives to seek and to save their fellow men from the consequences of sins of the flesh.

The serious day-time business was balanced by the evenings' social engagements; and, later, by excursions in which much of interest was seen in a country which many were visiting for the first time. As in Paris in 1961, and in Edinburgh last year, the clerk of the weather contributed to the general enjoyment; and, if the renowned beauty of the city of Copenhagen was eclipsed at all, it was only by the geniality and generosity of our Danish hosts.

Considerations of space preclude the listing even of the names of all those who contributed to making the Copenhagen meeting the success it undoubtedly was; but mention must be made of two: our indefatigable honorary Secretary, Dr. Claude Nicol, now President of the M.S.S.V.D., whose groundwork in preparing for the meeting is beyond praise; and our chief host, Dr. Axel Perdrup, who, with his charming wife, can be counted on to make any medical gathering run happily and harmoniously.

The main activities of the M.S.S.V.D. are, of course, centred on London; but the Council, in its wisdom, has arranged the last three annual out-of-town summer meetings in capital cities in the South, the North, and the East. So well attended and enjoyable have these been that it will be only in a geographical sense that the Society ever goes West.

R.F.