

THE TENTH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF MILITARY MEDICINE AND PHARMACY

THE Congress was opened on May 7th, 1939 in the city of Washington D.C., and later held in the New York City, where it terminated on May 19th, 1939. More than thirty nations were represented at the Congress. Col. A. C. Munro, of the Indian Medical Service, was one of the delegates to the Congress.

In his address, the President of the Congress complimented the delegates from thirty-two distant countries, who had come there to lay the resources of medicine before the people of all nations, who are or who may be exposed to the greatest enemy, viz., war. Medicine has no social, national or military boundaries and it has no military enemies. The President briefly referred to the triumphs of military medicine and surgery during the last War and the many problems, which still remained unsolved. He said, "In spite of the inhumanity of war, which is the most debased act of civilised man, some of the by-products of war have been beneficial. A war gives the first notice to the nation of the physical unfitness of a large proportion of its youth, much of it due to remediable defects. It serves as a warning to the nation to take an account of its state of health". He continued, "Medicine is not war-minded. Rather it ministers to the peace of mind, body and soul; if in the course of events the forces of mass brutality prevail over the gentle mandates of the prince of peace, medicine shall be ready to rescue from the wreckage of human folly."

A symposium was held under the joint auspices of the *Association of Military Surgeons* of the United States and the *Tenth International Congress of Military Medicine and Pharmacy*. The subject of the symposium was "The rôle of aviation medicine in the development of aviation". The report of this symposium is the most informative reading in the *Proceedings*. In it, we find a historical sketch of all the interesting researches made on the medical aspects of aviation—the symptoms produced at high altitudes, the adaptability of the physiological functions of the body to high altitudes, the attempts made to overcome the ill-effects of altitude and other important questions relating to aviation medicine.

Modern aviation is only slightly over thirty-six years old. While much work has been carried out on the mechanics of aviation, it is only recently that attention is being given to the pilot. In most of the progressive countries, minimum standards for military pilots have been drawn up and also a special medical ser-

vice for aviators has been established. All the principal countries engaged in the Great War had medical departments which were integral parts of their air services. Post-War aviation medicine progressed with the development of civil airways, including passenger air transportation and air mail service. Thanks to the progress of aeronautics and the proper selection of pilots, air transportation to-day is as comfortable as that of land travel. The establishment of civil aviation created the need for civil flight surgeons. Aviation medicine is now an important and well established branch of general medicine. Owing to the phenomenal growth of air transport and the rapidly expanding military air force, Aviation Medicine is bound to occupy a prominent place as a special subject in medicine.

The various subjects discussed at the symposium were:—(1) The organisation and function of the medical services in colonial expeditions, (2) Probable casualties in war and methods of calculation, (3) Practical procedures for anæsthesia and analgesia in war surgery, (4) Organisation and function of the Military Chemico-Pharmaceutical service, (5) Emergency treatment and primary apparatus for fractures of the jaws in the war, (6) Technical specialisation of administrative officers in the medical service, and (7) Oxygen therapy and its practical use with troops on active duty.

On the tenth day of the session, held at New York City, several interesting papers, e.g., "World War experiences in Turkey," "Surgical practice in Panama," "Surgical anæsthesia," "The influenza epidemic," "International agreements relating to hospital ships," "Biopsy of the lung with broncho-catheter," were read and discussed.

The delegates were treated to lavish banquets, and taken round to various places of interest, including the New York World's Fair.

All the delegates carried away with them splendid recollections of American hospitality. Col. Thomann submitted the formal invitation of his government to hold the next International Congress in Switzerland in 1941. The acceptance of the invitation by the International Committee was unanimously approved by the Congress, which expressed its thanks to the Swiss Government through its representative, Col. Thomann. Capt. Bambridge was presented with a medal in appreciation of his work in connection with the *International Congress*, since its foundation in 1921.

T. S. TIRUMURTI.

CENTENARIES

Stark, William (1740-1770)

WILLIAM STARK, a British physician, was born in Birmingham July, 1740. Having become an M.A. (Philosophy) of the Glasgow University in 1758 and after spending seven years at Edinburgh, he came to London in 1765 and devoted himself to the study of medicine at St. George's Hospital.

DIETETICAL EXPERIMENTS

Under the guidance of John Hunter he took up the experimental study of blood and other animal fluids. He graduated M.D. at Leyden in 1766. In June 1769 he began a series of experiments on diet. The zeal with which he tried the experiments on his own body ruined his health.

To ascertain the effects of different quantities and kinds of food upon the human economy, Stark confined himself for periods of from four to fourteen days to certain articles of diet and carefully registered the influence which they seemed to exercise on the several functions of the body. He began for instance with bread and water; then he added to them, in succeeding periods, sugar, olive oil and milk; then he took different kinds of animal food and each in different quantities. Then he experienced with a diet of bread, honey and tea. In fourteen days this brought on diarrhoea. To remedy this he changed over to bread, cheese and rosemary. This produced a totally opposite state of the intestines with inflammation of their glands.

His *Works consisting of clinical and anatomical observations, with experiments diatetical and statical* were published in 1788.

VICTIM TO SCIENCE

Stark's persistent pursuit of the dietetic experiments on himself made him a victim to his enthusiasm within seven months, 23 February 1770.

Ball, Robert Stawell (1840-1913)

ROBERT STAWELL BALL, an Irish astronomer, was born at Dublin 1 July 1840. He had a brilliant career at school and at Trinity College, Dublin, where he carried away many prizes, medals and scholarships. While tutor to the sons of the Earl of Rosse between 1865 and 1867, Ball had the opportunity to use the

celebrated six-foot reflecting telescope of Lord Rosse. Through it he made regular observations of nebulae and developed his interest in practical astronomy.

HIS CAREER

Ball was successively professor of applied mathematics in the Royal College of Science at Dublin (1868-1874); Andrews professor of astronomy in the University of Dublin and royal astronomer of Ireland (1874-1892); and Lowndean professor of astronomy at Cambridge. Due to the loss of his right eye, he had to give up observational work. But his reputation as a professor knew no bounds.

HIS PUBLICATIONS

In 1888 he published the well-known and much-used *Treatise on spherical astronomy*. Between 1877 and 1906 he published no less than thirteen popular books on astronomy. As a popular lecturer he came in contact with the widest circle. He delivered courses of Christmas lectures at the Royal Institution and for many years he lectured under the auspices of the Gilchrist Trust. His lecturing services were also requisitioned in America on three occasions.

AS A MATHEMATICIAN

While Ball was best known to his contemporaries through his popular lectures, he will be best remembered by posterity for his researches in Mathematics. As a true product of the Dublin school, his flair was along geometrical lines and all his researches were unified by his theory of screw motions. The ideas developed in twelve memoirs published at different times by the Royal Irish Academy, were later incorporated in two well-known treatises of permanent value: *Theory of Screws: a study in the dynamics of a rigid body* (1876) and *Treatise on the theory of screws* (1900). Even after these treatises were published, he further extended the subjects right up to his seventieth year through four more memoirs. These contributions have led Prof. E. T. Whittaker to rank him as "one of the two or three greatest British mathematicians of his generation".

Ball was knighted in 1886 and died at Cambridge 25 November, 1913.

S. R. RANGANATHAN.

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