

# RES MEDICA

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## Retrospect 223rd Session

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M.B., Ch.B. Senior President of the Royal Medical Society 1959-60.

### Abstract

The 223rd session may one day be regarded as the beginning of an era in the life of the Society. It has been a time when considerable interest has grown among members in the business and welfare of the Society, for which we owe not a little to the office-bearers of the past two or three sessions who by their ardour have saved us from a bed of apathy.

We have concerned ourselves with the position of the Society in the University, and have found that our opinions and our activities as a body do not have the same import as would be desirable. Gone are the days when we could do battle with the managers of the Royal Infirmary for betterment of teaching conditions for undergraduates.

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# Retrospect 223rd Session

By J. G. CLARK, M.B., Ch.B.

Senior President of the Royal Medical  
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We have considered the usefulness of the Society to medical undergraduates and have remarked on the reasons which may be keeping so large a proportion of them, including many of Edinburgh's most promising pupils, from partaking of such wealth as may be found in the Royal Medical Society. It is plain to see, if we think about it, that it is not only they who lose, but we ourselves.

The result of this is the Questionnaire, carefully prepared by a committee of four, which was distributed among all present members of the Society and as many recent members as could be traced. It may be argued against such a questionnaire that it denotes an introspective attitude which is not in the best interests of the Society. Any introspection, however, is purely the result of a real concern about the effect of the Society on the world around it, and its value to members. We hope, therefore, that this investigation will be taken most seriously, and that the report of the committee, presented in the autumn, be considered very fully, for in this way the Society may be greatly benefited.

A full and interesting programme kept our attention during the session, beginning with Professor McMichael's historical survey of research in medicine. At the joint meeting with the Royal Scottish Society of Arts We heard Professor Polson, of Leeds, on the "art" of Forensic investigation. It is becoming increasingly difficult, in these days, when the laboratory report begins to usurp the patient's history, to find a situation where medicine may be called an art. The Artists, however, were not disappointed by Professor Polson.

The Annual Dinner was held once again in the College of Surgeons, where Sir Stanley Davidson was the guest of honour. As a social occasion the Dinner was a success, and as a financial accomplishment it shone no less brightly. All credit is due to Dr Nigel Malcolm-Smith and his committee, who toiled ceaselessly with correspondence. His modesty was only exceeded by his surprise when the bank balance turned in our favour.

Other items in the round of winter activities included a visit to Saughton Prison, where work on the rehabilitation of the convicted was shown, and, of course, the perennial visit to a brewery where, to use a popular phrase,

"A very good all was had by Time." Mr Ian McLaren conducted a most useful clinical evening in the Royal Infirmary, and a film show was arranged but did not prove popular. The Annual Dinner Dance was not held as usual in the Carlton Hotel and our sympathies were with the dinner-dance committee when the alternative accommodation was found not to be up to their expectations.

The Society's library continues to flourish and towards the end of next session the recataloguing should be virtually completed, thus making our fascinating collection of books readily available to the reader. Also we hope that the priceless, the valuable and the useful books may then more easily be separated from the worthless, the valueless and the useless, which seem to be there in the same quantity. Many apparently useless old books do, nonetheless, have a great value to the reader, "For herein may he weave a cushion of velvet upon the oak chair of his medical knowledge." The haematologist may well benefit from such a work as "The Functions of the Spleen, with sundry observations on the Anatomy of the Elephant," written over a century ago.

"The Society's Library," by Dr J. J. C. Cormack, constitutes one of the greatest honours done to the Society in recent years, in that it has been printed in the Bulletin of the Medical Library Association of the U.S.A. The effect of this upon the Society, we feel sure, will be far-reaching, and we congratulate Dr Cormack on his achievement. Reprints from the Bulletin are available from *Librorum Custos*.

Interest in the Society continues the world over, and in the last session we have had enquiries concerning former members from London, Paris, Boston and Philadelphia. We trust that present members will not fail to do honour to their great heritage.