

RES MEDICA

Journal of the Royal Medical Society



Review

The Editor

Abstract

It was with mixed feelings that we came to the first part of our sale at Sotheby's. We could not be but pleased that four years of careful thought and debate, then of negotiation, had come to an end; but the pleasure was mixed with sadness that the library was being split up irrevocably under the auctioneer's hammer. Economic logic was not enough to fully cover the feeling that had bound the books to the Society's history.

The sale began at 11am precisely, on Monday, 10th February. By 1.30pm the same day the books had realised £21,000; and on the following day a further £18,000 had accrued in less than two hours. The total sum from the first sale therefore does much to justify the decision to sell by auction, and justifies completely our hopes that the total sale should reach something more than £100,000, if not equalling the £ 120,000 that was turned down early last year when an American institution had offered to buy the whole collection.

The principle that the books should be available to all, and particularly British collectors has been justified too. Although the biggest buyers were naturally the dealers Dawson and Rota, a number of the more important works were in fact acquired by private collectors. Most notable was the successful bidding by a London professor of Chemistry for nearly all our collection of the works of Boyle as well as for other works on chemistry such as Davy's "Researches Chemical and Philosophical" and Clarke's "The Gas Blowpipe or Art of Fusion".

Copyright Royal Medical Society. All rights reserved. The copyright is retained by the author and the Royal Medical Society, except where explicitly otherwise stated. Scans have been produced by the Digital Imaging Unit at Edinburgh University Library. Res Medica is supported by the University of Edinburgh's Journal Hosting Service: <http://journals.ed.ac.uk>

ISSN: 2051-7580 (Online) ISSN: 0482-3206 (Print)

Res Medica is published by the Royal Medical Society, 5/5 Bristo Square, Edinburgh, EH8 9AL

Res Medica, Autumn 1969, 6(4): 35-37

doi: [10.2218/resmedica.v6i4.869](https://doi.org/10.2218/resmedica.v6i4.869)

REVIEW

● It was with mixed feelings that we came to the first part of our sale at Sotheby's. We could not be but pleased that four years of careful thought and debate, then of negotiation, had come to an end; but the pleasure was mixed with sadness that the library was being split up irrevocably under the auctioneer's hammer. Economic logic was not enough to fully cover the feeling that had bound the books to the Society's history.

The sale began at 11am precisely, on Monday, 10th February. By 1.30pm the same day the books had realised £21,000; and on the following day a further £18,000 had accrued in less than two hours. The total sum from the first sale therefore does much to justify the decision to sell by auction, and justifies completely our hopes that the total sale should reach something more than £100,000, if not equalling the £120,000 that was turned down early last year when an American institution had offered to buy the whole collection.

The principle that the books should be available to all, and particularly British collectors has been justified too. Although the biggest buyers were naturally the dealers Dawson and Rota, a number of the more important works were in fact acquired by private collectors. Most notable was the successful bidding by a London professor of Chemistry for nearly all our collection of the works of Boyle as well as for other works on chemistry such as Davy's "Researches Chemical and Philosophical" and Clarke's "The Gas Blowpipe or Art of Fusion".

There were a number of surprises which made the sale exciting as well as successful. Ampère's "Theory of Electrodynamic Phenomena" went for three times its valuation price, at £450. Baer's "De Ovi Humani" reached a

staggering £1600 having been valued at £300, and a dedicated copy of Claude Bernard's "De L'Origine du Sucre" brought £1200.

As expected, Bright's "Reports" reached four figures, but better still brought its highest recorded price at £1600 for Messrs Dawson.

All this on the first morning. And the second morning was just as lively; Carpué's "Restoration of the Nose" climbed to £1200 as had Caesalpinnus' "De Plantis" five minutes earlier. Dawsons were successful in their bid for Floyer's "Pulse Watch" at £450, three times valuation.

Lot 438, a very extensive collection of about 3000 Edinburgh Dissertations (not the Society's Dissertations) was withdrawn at the last moment when Sotheby's discovered two more cases of books in their store, including a number of further dissertations, and these will be re-catalogued for a later sale. Lot 468 was withdrawn completely, to be returned to the Society; this was a 1790 narrative "of some late injurious proceedings of the managers of the Royal Infirmary against the students of medicine" which included a manuscript minute of a meeting of the students concerned in the Society's Library.

The auctioneer was Lord John Kerr. While his manner was cool and deliberate on his rostrum he later confessed that this had been for him a most exciting auction: he himself had received bids for every lot and from all over the world, and many it seems from Life Members of the Society; Dawsons too had an unusual number of commissions, which all went to make the sale the more exciting and successful.

The next sale will be in July, when we will once more put into effect our massive mailing machinery to ensure that each Life Member

receives both notice of sale and his souvenir catalogue. A third sale should take place in the autumn. Sotheby's have described the first sale as "fantastic" both in the pattern of bidding and in the prices realised, and are optimistic for the final sale figures; we in turn are satisfied that ours was a correct decision.

● Everyone who has ever been to a President's Dinner knows that it isn't really the President's at all. The dinner is ours, the guests, whilst the Presidents, rigid with apprehension, which the wine does nothing to allay, come along merely to entertain and amuse us with their witty speeches. This is part of the tradition of the occasion; an integral feature of the cosy atmosphere, of the whole *déjà-vu* experience.

The atmosphere and the essential characteristics were the same this year as always: one was sitting by the same nice people, the food was the same, and the conversation hadn't changed much either. It didn't really matter. As one slipped into the depths of physical contentment, so old faces became younger and young faces achieved a surprising maturity; the talk seemed to sparkle more and even the portraits on the walls looked fractionally less ugly.

Sir John made a serious speech which was rather moving; Professor Perry didn't, but he was about to leave Edinburgh, so his made us sad too. We all applauded furiously, and thought what splendid men they were (which, of course, they are). Dr. Simpson's speech was a funny one, and we all laughed immoderately. However the greatest success of the evening was Miss Duncan, whose charm enveloped us all like a tangible cloud.

Rapport, en masse, is a rare phenomenon, but we achieve it at our dinner. We will next year too; it's one of the pleasanter inevitabilities of life.

● Once more we thank our honorary editorial board. Also Miss Joan Ross and all the typists in Clinical Surgery and Miss Harkins for so cheerfully doing all the extra work that we have burdened them with over the past year.

University of Edinburgh
Pfizer Medical Monographs

1. Diabetes Mellitus

edited by L. J. P. Duncan
out of print

2. Racial and Geographical Factors in Tumour Incidence

edited by A. A. Shivas. 'This book reveals much of what has been done, what can be done, and what needs to be done.' *The Lancet*, 63s.

3. Rheumatic Diseases

edited by J. J. R. Duthie and W. R. M. Alexander. The three main subjects considered are rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus and gout. 63s.

4. Malabsorption

edited by R. M. Girdwood and A. W. Smith. The small intestine was for long a no-man's land in clinical and scientific investigation. This is no longer the case. Biopsy studies have led to fuller understanding of micro-anatomical detail; histochemistry has provided a powerful analytical tool; biochemical studies have been made more dynamic by the use of isotopic methods. The pathological and bacteriological changes in malabsorption fit into this picture of functional disorder, and are no longer merely catalogued as descriptive of morbid anatomical change. The implications — for childhood growth; for sprue; for undernutrition; for blood diseases; for neoplasia — are important, and are discussed in this volume by distinguished specialists from Britain, the USA, and Europe, 80s.

Edinburgh

University Press

THE CONTRIBUTORS

DR. HENRY WALTON is the consultant in administrative charge and director of the University Department of Psychiatry at the Western General Hospital. The second part of his article, written specially for RES MEDICA, gives us a great deal of insight into the way in which the Psychiatrist obtains his information from the patient.

MR. TOM HAMILTON is Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Clinical Surgery. In 1964 he was in the Ben May Laboratory for Cancer Research under the direction of Dr. Charles Huggins, Nobel Prizewinner 1966 for the demonstration of hormone dependence in cancer. Tom Hamilton's major interest is the endocrine and environmental influences upon human cancer — particularly of the breast.

PROFESSOR CHARLOTTE AUERBACH was elected F.R.S. in 1957 and was appointed to the chair of Animal Genetics in Edinburgh in 1967. She is well known for her pioneering work on the Chemical Induction of Mutations and her article is based on a very well received address, which she gave to the Society in November last year.

DR. H. W. C. GRIFFITHS is Consultant Anaesthetist in the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh. He carries on the Edinburgh tradition of the use of chloroform in anaesthetics. His article lucidly sets out the case for chloroform with masterly handling of the historical controversies surrounding this subject.

COLIN CURRIE is now in Final Phase having spent a year doing an Honours Physiology degree. His writing outside the scientific field is notable for its incisive aptness. His interest in Growth Hormone is said to have begun with a 28 mile run, complete with respirator, during his Physiology days.

ROBIN HUNTER is the 1968-69 Senior President of the R.M.S. and also took his Honours Degree in Physiology. He has been a very popular and efficient President and his article on the immunological aspects of cancer originates from a dissertation given before the Society on that subject.

PROFESSOR CHRISTIAN BARNARD, who is Professor of Surgical Science at Cape Town University Medical School, needs no introduction to our readers. Many will have heard him speak in Edinburgh when he was here as a guest of the Royal Medical Society and we welcome his views on the ethical problems of transplantation.

Fire, Earth and Water

Fire, Earth and Water are the first Materials of which all Sensible Bodies are composed. To these three classes by properly conducted Processes the most Compounded Body can be reduced, and upon the various combination of these three arises all the surprising Variety to be found in the Subjects of Natural History, therefore the different Virtues depend not so much on the Bodies themselves as on their different Union one with another.

Chemistry either unites Bodys that were before separate or separates those that were before united therefore every Process makes a new Medicine as it causes a new Change or to speak as above a new Virtue.

—from the Society's collection of Dissertations, 1751.