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Autor: [s.n.]

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British-Swiss Medical Conference

After having organized a Franco-Swiss Medical Week which took place at Geneva in 1945, the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences entered into correspondence with the medical organizations of Great-Britain, so as to arrange a scientific meeting. Enquiry of the Royal Society of Medicine soon showed that the British colleagues approved of this plan and a preparatory committee composed of prominent representatives of British medical societies was formed under the chairmanship of Sir Gordon Gordon-Taylor, President of the Royal Society of Medicine. Mr. G. R. Edwards, Secretary General of the Royal Society of Medicine, was appointed Secretary of this committee and we owe him all our thanks for his great efforts and the important preparatory work done by him.

The British-Swiss Medical Conference was eventually held in Basle from September 16 to 21 and there was an unexpectedly strong participation on the British side. 149 British doctors and scientists and 160 Swiss took part. Though there were first some difficulties due to the difference of languages, there was soon a friendly atmosphere between doctors and scientists of both countries.

At the opening session, which took place in the impressive Aula of the ethnological museum, the guests were welcomed by the President of the Academy of Medical Sciences. Then there were addresses by Dr. Ph. Etter, Federal Councillor, Mr. Maitland Snow, British Minister in Switzerland, Lord Amulree, delegate of the British Ministry of Health, Dr. Miville, representative of the Basle Government, Minister Rüeegger, Prof. Bonjour, Rector of the University of Basle, Dr. Alan Drury, Dr. John B. Hunter and Prof. Dible. Many of the speakers mentioned the long-standing political and cultural ties between Great-Britain and Switzerland and referred to the present position of Switzerland. In this connection Prof. Gigon was proud to be able to draw attention to the portraits of two famous citizens of Basle who had been elected members of the Royal Society in London—Leonhard Euler and John Bernoulli. Bernoulli owed his membership to the special recommendation of Newton.

The scientific activity of the Congress began with a paper in German on «Head injuries during the second World War» which was read by Sir Hugh Cairns immediately after the opening session. All the

other papers were read in English in auditorium No. 2 at the University. They were immediately translated into German and—thanks to the microphones fitted up—could be followed also by non-English-speaking doctors. All the papers were of a high scientific standard and introduced the Swiss hearers to the many interesting results of modern British research work. 14 papers were read by British and 10 by Swiss scientists. They treated subjects from quite different domains of medicine and were published the same week in the Swiss Medical Journal (Schweiz. Med. Wochenschrift).

The banquet held in the Three Kings was from the very beginning marked by a free and friendly atmosphere which grew more cordial still as the evening advanced. On the Swiss side, the guests were welcomed by: the President of the Academy, Prof. Dr. C. Wegelin, Councillor Dr. Peter as representative of the authorities of the city of Basle, Prof. Lutz, Dean and representative of the Basle Medical Faculty and Dr. Leuch, delegate of the Association of Swiss Doctors. In a lively address full of wit, Sir Heneage Ogilvie of the Royal College of Surgeons, who proved to be an expert on the subject of Switzerland and her mission for peace, thanked both the Academy and the Basle Government in the name of the guests from all over the British Isles.

On Wednesday evening British and Swiss scientists met in the Casino so as to discuss the papers read during the first three days of the Congress.

One morning was spent in visiting the chemical factories. The plants and working methods of these factories greatly interested all the visitors. On another occasion, the members of the Congress drove out to Rheinfelden. Here they were greeted by Dr. Fierz, who brought the compliments of the Government of Canton Aargau and the Kurverein Rheinfelden, and by Dr. Welti, who spoke on behalf of the city of Rheinfelden. These speeches were followed by a most interesting paper on "Industrial Medicine" read by Dr. Donald Hunter. His descriptions of the prophylactic measures to be taken for the prevention of certain industrial diseases were followed with particular keenness by the audience. Driving back to Basle a halt was made at Augst, where Dr. Vischer explained the lay-out of the Roman theatre. A visit was also made to the new municipal hospital in Basle.

After the official closing of the Congress many of the British guests were present at the scientific session of the Academy, which was opened by a brilliant paper on "Surgical Rehabilitation" read by Sir Reginald Watson-Jones. His explanations were illustrated by a film. Then Dr. Needham spoke on the activity of the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). At the same meeting,

Prof. Nager of Zurich was presented with the diploma of the Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Society of Medicine.

It was evident that the British-Swiss Medical Conference was a success in every way and especially in the field of international scientific cooperation. The many letters of thanks received from our British colleagues prove that the Congress made a very good impression and that they appreciated the hospitality of Basle. The success of the Congress was in no small measure due to the efforts of Prof. Gigon and Prof. Rothlin, who so efficiently carried out the difficult task of organizing the meeting.