

nary"; at the noon luncheon he made a plea for better teaching of college subjects, and at the dinner meeting, he discussed what civilization may expect from science in the future.

THE New England Association of Chemistry Teachers and the Eastern Association of Physics Teachers held a joint meeting on April 8 in the new Thompson Science Building of the Phillips Exeter Academy, Exeter, New Hampshire. This new building, the gift of the late Colonel William Boyce Thompson, of Yonkers, New York, and a graduate of the academy in the class of 1890, embodies the latest equipment and facilities for teaching chemistry and physics.

THE sixth annual scientific meeting, and twenty-

seventh annual South African Medical Congress, will be held in Capetown from September 25 to 30, under the presidency of Mr. E. Barnard Fuller. The work of the congress will be divided among five sections as follows: medicine, surgery, gynecology and obstetrics, public health and special subjects (six subsections). At the three plenary sessions the topics for general discussion are: diet in relation to health in South Africa; prevention of maternal mortality in urban and rural areas in South Africa, and medico-legal problems of general practise. An exhibition of specimens of medical interest from a historical point of view is being arranged in conjunction with the trades exhibition.

## DISCUSSION

### THE HIGH COST OF GERMAN MEDICAL AND SCIENTIFIC PERIODICALS

THE financial problem of literature in the scientific fields, especially those of medicine and the biological sciences, has for some time been a matter of concern to those interested in educational institutions and in providing facilities for investigators engaged in scientific work. Fortunately, in most countries this type of literature has not been extensively commercialized. Wise editorial policies and economical management have prevented prices from becoming exorbitant. This has not, however, been equally true of all countries, notably Germany. Much of the German scientific literature appears in periodicals which, while containing excellent work, are since the war published at absolutely prohibitive prices. The high prices of German periodicals have affected all scientific libraries, and especially medical libraries, since the increase in prices has been the largest in the field of medicine, biology and chemistry. The Medical Library Association has been concerned for some time over this situation, which has been growing progressively worse until the subscription rates for some of these journals have now reached \$90.00 to \$173.00 a year.

Several interesting articles on this subject have appeared. Dr. Raymond Pearl,<sup>1</sup> of Johns Hopkins University, Mr. Charles H. Brown,<sup>2</sup> of Iowa State College Library, Colonel Fielding H. Garrison,<sup>3</sup> of the Welch Medical Library, Mr. Alfred L. Robert and Mr. Hans Schaltenbrand,<sup>4</sup> of the College of Physicians

and Surgeons in New York, Dr. Wilfrid Bonser,<sup>5</sup> Librarian of the University of Birmingham, England, and others<sup>6</sup> have made excellent studies regarding the cost of scientific periodicals, and the dangers inherent in some of the present policies.

The Medical Library Association appointed a committee, consisting of Colonel Fielding H. Garrison, Mr. Alfred L. Robert and Mrs. Eileen R. Cunningham, to investigate the high cost of German medical periodicals, and see what might be done to alleviate this situation. This study has brought out several interesting facts. It is evident that in a large or medium-sized medical library in this country, two thirds or even more of the total annual appropriation for current periodicals is expended on German periodicals, issued chiefly by one or two firms, leaving less than one third of the funds available to be used for the scientific output of all other nations, including the United States and many of the more reasonably priced German publications. This is obviously an absurd situation. Appeals to these German publishers have been met with promises to reduce the volume output, but so far prices have increased and nothing constructive has been accomplished.

The fact that German scientific publications do not usually receive financial aid from foundations and scientific societies undoubtedly renders it more difficult for publication cost to be as low as in other countries, but there seems to be no justification for prices which vary from five to eight, or more, times as much as those of any other nation. It seems difficult to explain these publishers' prices on a cost plus basis. No definite yearly subscription price is announced;

Comparative Cost of Medical Journals." *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association*, 20: 140-155, 1932.

<sup>5</sup> Wilfrid Bonser, "The Cost of German Biological Publications." *Library Association Record*, n. s. 6: 252-256, 1928.

<sup>6</sup> "The Cost of German Medical Journals." Editorial, *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 27: 63-64, 1932.

<sup>1</sup> Raymond Pearl, "Cost of Biological Books in 1928." *Quarterly Review of Biology*, 3: 600-603, 1928.

<sup>2</sup> Charles H. Brown, "A Hazard to Research," *Journal of Higher Education*, 2: 420-426, 1931.

<sup>3</sup> Fielding H. Garrison, "Dangers Besetting the Literature of Recent Medicine." *Festschrift zur Feier des 60. Geburtstages Max Neuburger*, Wien, 1928. "The High Cost of Current Medical Periodicals." *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association*, n. s., 20: 165-169, 1932.

<sup>4</sup> Alfred L. Robert and Hans Schaltenbrand, "The

one number of a journal may cost \$5, while the next may cost \$10, and yet only perhaps thirty to forty more pages are included, and the plates, curves and charts do not seem essentially different from those of the less expensive number.

We are also convinced that if the editors and publishers of these expensive journals would really co-operate in an earnest effort to bring down prices, something could be accomplished. The chief responsibility rests with the publishers, however, for in Germany they control the medical publications, employ the editors and pay for the papers printed in the journals. Lately, in every commercial undertaking, prices have been scaled to meet changed economic conditions, and the publishing business should be no exception to this rule.

These German publishers have cautioned libraries against cancellation, as they say that a decrease in the number of subscriptions would lead to an increase of prices for the remaining subscribers. Many American libraries are facing reduction of income, and every means possible is being considered whereby economies can be effected. Therefore, it is obviously impossible for many of them to continue subscriptions to these high priced journals. Many European libraries and individual subscribers, even in Germany, have been forced to cancel their subscriptions, and unless there is evidence of a change in policy on the part of the German publishers, it will not be long before there will be wide-spread cancellation of these high-priced journals by American libraries, who are at present among the most extensive subscribers. If this is to be met by further increase in prices, still further cancellations will result, and a vicious cycle established which would certainly be unfortunate for all concerned.

The Medical Library Association therefore decided to issue an appeal to the German scientific and medical societies and to editors of German medical journals. The American College of Physicians joined the Medical Library Association in this appeal, which was issued in January 1933.<sup>7</sup> This letter summarized the situation and urged German scientists to use their influence and cooperation wherever possible to bring about a decrease in the cost of these journals before wide-spread cancellation had become inevitable.

A few suggestions were made as to possibilities in accomplishing this objective: (1) Decrease in the size and number of the volumes, through briefer articles and careful editorial selection; (2) fixed annual subscription prices for the journals; (3) statements in

advance of the approximate number of volumes to appear each year.

That the present situation is considered unfortunate by many Germans is indicated by several articles which have appeared lately in the German journals,<sup>8,9</sup> showing that the subject is being given consideration there as well as elsewhere.

The situation is a serious one, and those interested in medical education, scientists and investigators, especially in the fields of medicine and the biological sciences, should use any influence they may have with German colleagues to urge their cooperation in reducing the prices of these scientific journals. It is also of the utmost importance for such individuals to study the situation in regard to the particular library from which their reference material is drawn.

In view of present economic conditions, it is likely that the next few years will see the cancellation of large numbers of these expensive German journals, until they will be available only in the large cities, and in libraries with large endowments. This means that investigators working at a distance from such centers will be at a disadvantage as compared with other colleagues; but unless within the next few months marked cooperation is shown on the part of the editors and publishers of these high-priced German journals, the unfortunate results outlined above will inevitably take place.

That we, in this country, can continue indefinitely to expend 70 per cent. of our current periodical budgets for perhaps forty or fifty journals published by a few German firms is extremely unlikely; especially when there are three to five hundred journals necessary for a good medical library, many of which certainly contain material as valuable as that appearing in the journals which are so excessively high priced.

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### IS LONGEVITY COMPATIBLE WITH OPTIMUM GROWTH?

MODERN nutrition is governed by the philosophy that a diet which produces optimum growth in the young animal is the ideal. This carries with it the assumption that optimum growth means optimum health. When experimental findings are applied to

<sup>8</sup> Georg Leyh, Address delivered before the Vereins Deutscher Bibliothekare und des Verbandes Deutscher Volksbibliothekare in Jena am 18. u. 19. Mai 1932. *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 49, Heft 8, 1932.

<sup>9</sup> H. Morstatt, "Über die Notwendigkeit, den Umfang der wissenschaftlichen Veröffentlichungen einzuschränken." *Die Naturwissenschaften*, 19: 968, 1931.

<sup>7</sup> This letter was published in full in the *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association*, n. s., 21: 90-91, 1933. Reprints can be obtained by those interested on application to the Chairman of the Committee on Cost of Current Medical Periodicals.