

## TRAINING OF MEDICAL STUDENTS

THE General Medical Council is charged by Act of Parliament with the supervision of medical education in Britain, and is empowered to appoint visitors and inspectors to report on the quality and content of the training afforded by medical schools, and on the quality and standard of the examinations which punctuate the medical student's career. A number of "Recommendations as to the Medical Curriculum" were published by the Council in 1947, and were referred to at the time in a leading article in *Nature* (160, 482; 1947). Two main criticisms which these recommendations have evoked over the past ten years is that they were too detailed and precise, and that they left insufficient scope to licensing bodies and schools to vary their curricula and requirements as experience dictated. The biggest stumbling-block to independent action was that the whole period of professional study—five academic years—was divided into a period of pre-clinical studies, a transitional period of studies leading to the clinical course, and a period of clinical studies, for each of which a minimum duration was recommended. A new set of recommendations has now been issued, very much shorter than the last, which departs from these temporal stipulations. While the Council insists, as before, on a minimum of five academic years for the full course, it does not lay down how the time which the medical student has to devote to all his professional studies should be subdivided between various subjects. This is now left to the initiative of licensing bodies and schools. Similarly, the new recommendations do not lay down, as a requirement, the number of separate subjects in which medical students should be examined, leaving it again to the authorities in each medical school, and to the licensing bodies, to decide whether or not certain of them can be combined in a single examination.

There are a number of other differences between the older recommendations and the new and shorter set by which they are superseded. One of the most interesting is that the Council has revoked a recommendation which has prevailed hitherto, and which no doubt reflected a practice that was centuries old, that each medical student should dissect the whole body during the period of his anatomical studies.

For the rest, the recommendations are in the same general terms as before. The Council continues to emphasize the need to reduce the congestion of the curriculum. But only the individual teacher can reveal what value there is in admonitions to eliminate unnecessary detail and specialization from the curriculum; in exhortations to integrate its various sections; in counsel that it is better to educate than to instruct; or in a generalization that the critical study of principles develops a capacity for independent thought far better than does an insistence on the memorization of factual data. Judging by previous results, the average teacher of medicine is somewhat allergic to these pieces of advice.

## THE LONDON SCHOOL OF TROPICAL MEDICINE

History of the School of Tropical Medicine in London (1899-1949)

By Sir Philip Manson-Bahr. (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine Memoir No. 11.) Pp. xiv+329. (London: H. K. Lewis and Co., Ltd., 1956.) 50s. net.

THE appearance of a new volume in the series of memoirs from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine is an important event in the literature of tropical medicine. This historical record of the London School from its foundation until 1949 maintains the high standards set by the preceding volumes. It is particularly valuable in that it is written by one who joined the staff of the School in 1909 and remained with it until he retired from the post of director of the Clinical Division in 1947. He therefore knew intimately the great figures who created and built up the School over its first fifty years, and he was personally implicated in the development of its clinical side.

The book is divided into four sections. The first, the historical section, begins by sketching the situation in regard to tropical medicine in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Sir Patrick Manson had returned from the Far East in 1893 and was practising in London, and in 1897 he was appointed medical adviser to the Colonial Office. The Prime Minister was so impressed by his description of the backward state of knowledge of tropical diseases that in 1898 he addressed a circular letter to the relevant authorities in Great Britain suggesting that facilities should be provided for training future medical officers of the Colonies in this subject. Preparations were immediately made for creating Schools of Tropical Medicine in Liverpool and London, and these were opened to students in 1899, the London School in the hospital of the Seamen's Hospital Society at Greenwich. The expansion and development of the London School and its contributions to the advancement of knowledge are then described. The buildings at Greenwich became too small, and in 1919 the School moved to Endsleigh Gardens, where again the accommodation soon became inadequate. In 1926 the Rockefeller Foundation offered a gift of two million dollars to the proposed new School of Hygiene in London on condition that it incorporated the London School of Tropical Medicine. This offer was accepted, and in 1929 the School of Tropical Medicine was integrated with the School of Hygiene in its present buildings. Further chapters are concerned with such subjects as the library, the museum, and the important malaria experiment in 1900 in the Roman Campagna which demonstrated that malaria could be prevented by protecting man from the bites of mosquitoes.

The author then gives a series of short biographies of members of the staff and workers at the School since its formation. Each presents briefly, in addition to a catalogue of scientific attainment, an intimate picture of its subject enlivened by the author's personal memories. They include not merely those whose names are famous, but also all who taught and helped in research, including assistant staff. The only biography missing is that of the author himself, and that has been contributed in a preface by Dr. Charles Wilcocks. A detailed diary follows,