

THE BULLETIN

OF THE

ROYAL COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS

COLLEGE NEWS

A CELEBRATION

An Honorary Fellow Extraordinary

Dr Alexander Walk, at that time President-Elect, Librarian, Co-Editor, Secretary of the Parliamentary Committee and our representative on the General Nursing Council, was the first Officer I spoke to when I joined the staff of the RMPA in January 1960. It was typical that he should telephone to welcome the newcomer, and, as I have learned over the years, also typical that he should then have been serving the Association in so many and varied ways, and that he should now still be engaged in the service of the College. To this service he has given his skill, wisdom, generosity and wit for half a century, and last month he and the College celebrated the Jubilee of his first

official appointment—as Assistant Editor of the *Journal of Mental Science*—in May 1928—a record never equalled by any other member.

It was Dr J. R. Lord, who was then the Senior Editor and probably the most prominent member of the Association, who picked his young AMO at Horton Hospital as a likely recruit to the work of the *Journal*, and it is in his connection with the *Journal* that Dr Walk's service—now as Associate Editor—has been continuous over the whole 50 years. He has been the colleague of five successive Editors, all of whom have valued his assistance, and many authors, researchers and readers have been grateful

Contents

College News:

A Celebration:			
An Honorary Fellow Extraordinary; by Natalie Cobbing	97	One Flew out of the Cuckoo's Nest?; by Kenneth Davison	106
Alexander Walk: Mentor and Friend; by Henry R. Rollin	99	The Consultant, One who Consults (an Oracle); by A. A. Baker	110
M.R.C.Psych. Examinations—Autumn 1978	100	How to get your Paper Published; by J. L. Crammer	112
Multiple Choice Examinations: Their Predictive Value in the Preliminary Test and the Membership Examination; by Christine Hassall and W. H. Trethowan	101	The Scribe's Column	113
Obituary: Henri Ey; by Ch. Brisset (translated by F. A. Jenner)	104	Reports and Pamphlets:	
W. H. Sheldon; by Richard N. Walker	104	State Hospital, Carstairs: Report of Public Local Inquiry	115
		Report on the Third European Liaison Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Road Traffic Accidents	116
		Correspondence	117
		Forthcoming Events	120

for his kindly advice, shared knowledge, and patience (usually) with their faults and foibles.

Elsewhere in this issue Dr Henry Rollin has more to say about Dr Walk's work for the Library. I record here that he was elected Librarian in 1945 and continued in that office for 25 years until the new constitution of the Royal College made necessary his retirement—at least officially. In 1945 the Library had the most meagre resources; there were serious gaps in its historical collection and it was very deficient in modern books; we owe it to Dr Walk that these deficiencies were to a large extent remedied. During all this time—and since, too, in a voluntary capacity—he has dealt personally with all requests for information and has given assistance and encouragement to members, students and other workers in many spheres of interest.

In the course of this work, Dr Walk deepened his knowledge of psychiatric history, and particularly of the history of the Association itself. Among a number of other writings he has described in detail the origins of the Association, and to the current issue of the *Journal* he contributes a further instalment of its history.

As one of the Officers, Dr Walk sat on the Association's Committees, and his interest in mental health legislation led to his selection as Secretary of the Special Committee preparing the RMPA's Evidence to the Royal (Percy) Commission in 1954. He drafted the Association's comprehensive and influential Memorandum, which received the exceptional compliment of being adopted almost unchanged by the BMA, and he gave the greater part of the oral evidence to the Commission. Thereafter, as Secretary of the Parliamentary Committee, he drafted the Association's comments on the Mental Health Bill and carried on the necessary correspondence with the Ministry and Members of Parliament during the passage of the Bill. He continued as Secretary of this Committee until his election to the Presidency, and it was during this time that he began to collect and write the 'Parliamentary News' which is now a regular feature of the *Bulletin*.

In 1953 Dr Walk, on the nomination of the RMPA was appointed a member of the General Nursing Council. Two years later he brought forward his plan for a radical reform of the curriculum for mental nurses, and this took shape in the Council's 1957 Syllabus in which for the first time the programme of teaching was adapted to the needs of the psychiatric nurse. He remained a member until 1968, taking a special interest in the Disciplinary functions of the Council, and in the establishment of the Enrolled Nurses grade in psychiatry.

After being Chairman of the South-Eastern

Division in 1956–8, Dr Walk was elected to the Presidency for the year 1960–61. It was the Association's 120th Annual Meeting, and he took the opportunity to extend the scope of the Meeting and to arrange for it to reflect his varied interests. The occasion was marked by a Reception in the state rooms at St James's Palace, graciously attended by H.R.H. the Duchess of Kent (Princess Marina), the patroness of all mental health activities; and to this were invited, beside members and guests of the Association, parties from a number of organizations representative of mental nursing and of psychiatric social work—for Dr Walk was also President of the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers. The subject of his Presidential Address was 'The History of Mental Nursing', and another feature of the Meeting was a whole day's symposium under the title 'Training the Team—the Psychiatrist's Part', again a truly multidisciplinary occasion, years before the 'team' idea became so prevalent.

It was about this time that members of the RMPA began to think seriously about the possible formation of a College, and Dr Walk chaired the Special Committee appointed by Council to consider the various options and seek the views of the membership. The work of this Committee led up to a ballot of the membership, after which another Special Committee put the case for a Royal College to the Privy Council. The formidable and voluminous work involved was directed by the General Secretary, Dr A. B. Monro, and it was Dr Walk who in 1957 had thought of Dr Monro as an ideal candidate and nominated him for the post. I have heard Dr. Walk say that this nomination was the best thing he had ever done for the Association and so eventually for the College.

After all this it is a pleasure to state that Dr Walk's presence and influence are still much in evidence at 17 Belgrave Square. As I write, he is busily engaged in reinstating the College Library after its years in storage, at the same time carrying on his regular work for the *Journal* and the *Bulletin* and dealing with queries on history and biography which keep coming in.

In his Presidential Address, Dr Walk confidently claimed that in loyalty and affection towards the Association he could stand comparison with the greatest of his predecessors. This is surely true—there can be no member in the history of the body which is now the College who has given more of himself for its benefit. He is, of course, an Honorary Fellow; if there were a grade of Honorary Fellow Extraordinary, he would be the first to fill it.

NATALIE COBBING