

TENTH
INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL
CONGRESS

Held in BERLIN, August, 1890.

[FROM BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL.]

PAST CONGRESSES.

Before proceeding to give an account of the scientific and general work of the great medical gathering now being held in Berlin, it may be well to glance backwards for a moment at the similar meetings which have taken place in past years. The history of this important periodical event in the world of medicine is interesting as showing its almost casual mode of origin, and the way in which it has developed from comparatively humble beginnings into one of the most powerful factors in the advance of knowledge and the promotion of community of effort, professional solidarity, and good-will among the members of our body throughout the world. Although an international hygienic congress was held at Brussels so far back as 1852, the International Medical Congress, as we now know it, is of much more recent date. Our French neighbors claim the merit of having originated the idea, but the first meeting which was held at Paris in 1867 appears to have been little more than an accidental expansion of the annual Congress of French medical men, which was being held in the ordinary course, by the addition of a considerable foreign contingent formed by the medical practitioners who had gone to Paris at the same time to see the great exhibition of that year. The scientific guests, who numbered about 500, were received by their French hosts with all the courtesy of the *grande nation*, and representative men of the different leading nationalities were chosen vice-presidents, among them, it is interesting to recall, being Professor Virchow, some of whose later utterances recently furnished Dr. Huchard with a text for a vehement call to all patriotic Frenchmen to boycott the Berlin Congress. The proceedings at the Paris Congress were almost purely scientific, with little or none of the festive element, which has been so prominent a feature in most of the subsequent gatherings. Moreover, French was the only language recognized at the meeting. The assembly, such as it was, however, was so successful that on motion of an Italian physician, Dr. Pantaleoni, it was determined to make an International Medical Congress a regular institution, the meetings to be held every two years. In compliment to Dr. Pantaleoni, Italy was fixed upon as the place for the next meeting. It had at first been intended to hold the second Congress at Rome, but as there were some doubts as to the willingness of the Papal Government to furnish facilities for the meeting, Florence was chosen, and a gathering was held there in 1869, in which 87 foreign practitioners took part. Owing to the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war, the third Congress was not held till 1873, when a successful meeting took place at Vienna, again contemporaneously with a Universal Exhibition. The veteran pathologist Rokitsansky was the president on that occasion, which is memorable in the annals of medicine for the part

assigned to discussions on important hygienic questions, such as the prophylaxis of cholera, compulsory vaccination, etc. At Vienna, also, it was decided that at future meetings there should be three official languages, namely, German, French and English. The fourth Congress was held at Brussels in 1875. The King of the Belgians took so much interest in the proceedings that he was present at many of the sittings. It was at this meeting that the Congress first divided into Sections. The fifth gathering was at Geneva in 1877, under the presidency of the illustrious biologist, Kar Vogt; the sixth at Amsterdam in 1879, under the presidency of Donders, whose death ophthalmology and physiology will long continue to deplore. The next meeting, which was held in London in 1881 marks an epoch in the history of the Congress. Some 3,000 practitioners, including about 1,000 foreigners, took part in it. It was divided into sixteen sections, which held 190 sittings, giving a total of 293 hours of work. The number of communications amounted to 325. The social aspects of the London Congress were not less brilliant than in the amount and quality of its scientific work. Of the meetings at Copenhagen in 1884 and at Washington in 1887 it is needless to say anything more than that, though very successful, they did not eclipse the splendour of the London gathering.

The arrangements for the Berlin Congress have been in the hands of Professors Virchow, E. von Bergmann, Waldeyer, and Leyden, with the assistance of the indefatigable General Secretary, Dr Lassar, and a strong Organising Committee. How well they have done their difficult and important work the following account of the proceeding which promises to be the most successful of all the meetings of the Congress hitherto held will suffice to show. It need only be added that the Imperial Government, the various German States, and the city of Berlin have made the amplest provision for the instruction and amusement of the members of the Congress, and have done all in their power to assure the success of the meeting.

OPENING CEREMONY.

Professor Virchow's Address of Welcome—Report of General Secretary—Speeches by Ministers and other Dignitaries.

The opening ceremonies took place in the Circus Renz, a vast circular building resembling the Albert Hall without its upper tiers of galleries. The Carlstrasse, in which it stands, was richly beflagged, and guarded by troops of mounted police. The short avenue leading to the principal portal was royally decked with Venetian masts bearing wreaths and festoons of laurel, and two mighty gilded tripods on lofty pedestals, and an inscription, *Universi Orbis Terrarum Medicos Saluamus*, gave a classical air to the festal decorations. As one entered the hall, the scene was dazzling. Daylight was quite shut out, and the vast expanse of the amphitheatre was flooded with electric light. Row upon row of ladies and gentlemen many in evening dress, a large number in uniform a few in academic costume, rose close-packed to the roof. The arena, crimson-carpeted, was filled with the accredited representatives of Governments, universities, and medical faculties, and members of the Diplomatic Body. Crosses and orders glittered here and there, and everywhere the dainty golden badge of the Congress, a staff of Æsculapius, caught the light. Facing the chief entrance a vast drop-scene, representing the interior of the Baths of Caracalla, as restored by the