

## Silver Jubilee of the *British Journal of Psychiatry*

1963 was the year in which the *Journal of Mental Science* became the *British Journal of Psychiatry*, and 1988 is therefore the silver jubilee of the journal in its present form. Strictly speaking, therefore, the anniversary should have been observed in January this year, but the logistics of the journal's production made the autumn a better time to produce a special issue, which is enlarged and contains some items outside the usual run. However, as those who occasionally read the front page will be aware, the original title was neither of the above, but in fact, *The Asylum Journal*, and this month the first page of its opening issue has been reproduced, together with a commentary on it by Henry Rollin. Like most scientific journals, this one began primarily as the written record of lectures and addresses that had been delivered at the meetings of a learned society; it was mainly for the benefit of members who could not be present, but as time went on, also increasingly for communication with colleagues on a wider scale. Yet the whole scientific community was then, by today's standards, minute in numbers, and English certainly not yet the *lingua franca* of medical discourse: until the First World War, French was at least as important worldwide, and German even more so. The original list of contents will show that what the journal printed then was largely a collection of personal impressions and opinions, based on clinical experience. Scientific psychiatry is essentially the product of our own times.

The editor who oversaw the transition to the journal's present form with great distinction was Eliot Slater, and it has been my particular pleasure recently to invite his daughter to become an assistant editor, representing psychogeriatrics. Like many British psychiatrists no doubt, I was a little dismayed in January 1963 when the new journal, with its rather lurid yellow cover, arrived through my letter box. The look of the *Journal of Mental Science* gave the impression of having changed little since the early part of the century, and for many years its editing had been mainly the work of one man — G. W. T. H. Fleming — though with the scholarly assistance for as long as anyone could remember of Alexander Walk. Not only did the new appearance of the journal seem to mark the arrival into learned publishing of the Swinging Sixties, but its changed title strongly suggested that the American model had been followed. Americanisation is a potent cultural force, but it would not be healthy for this to become merely the London edition of the *American Journal of Psychiatry*.

Eliot Slater was succeeded first by Edward Hare and then by J. L. Crammer, both of whom have contributed to this issue. It is very gratifying to me that

both continue to play a regular role in the Journal's work — as authors and as advisers — and their papers this month illustrate the special qualities which each brought to the editorship.

During the past five years, the journal has continued to evolve. A steadily growing volume of submissions from all parts of the world has attested both to its own high standing (of which the College can be proud) and to the increase in high-quality scientific and clinical work almost everywhere. There has therefore been both a considerable enlargement of the size of each issue and a more intensive use of available space — not always popular with the myopic. The page size had to be slightly reduced, because it had been non-metric, and this helped to control printing costs. The cover was redesigned, so that it was not unrelievedly yellow (a source of various jokes and nicknames), and this change seems to have been generally welcomed.

In parallel with these changes, the *Bulletin* has been evolving. By necessity, it remains partly the College's journal of record, and this function has been enlarged, for instance by the introduction of the obituary section as well as of more favourable news of members. At the same time, though, the *Bulletin* is also a scientific journal in its own right, with papers, correspondence, and book reviews. This function has grown steadily and to some extent reflects the fact that the Journal, like all major scientific publications, is increasingly international. As a consequence, papers which deal primarily with circumstances in the UK or Ireland are now more likely to find their place in the *Bulletin*, unless they have major implications for psychiatry in general. This does not imply a less favourable view of their quality, but merely a division of function between the two publications.

The *Bulletin* has also been greatly increased in size during the past few years, and appears this month with a new cover; the contents had already been redesigned for greater clarity. In addition, Council recently accepted the view that the steadily improving standard of scientific content in *Bulletin* papers should be acknowledged by a change of title, to indicate that it is a peer-reviewed journal. In the course of time, it is hoped that this higher status will be acknowledged by the organisations which list and abstract scientific publications. Meanwhile, readers should find *Psychiatric Bulletin* increasingly interesting; its record volume of correspondence suggests that it is striking the right chord.

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*The British Journal of Psychiatry*