

FIRST ANNUAL-DINNER-MEETING
OF THE MONTREAL CLINICAL SOCIETY

BUCHAREST RESTAURANT, MAY 1938

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT - HAROLD N. SEGALL
WITH APOLOGIES TO WILLIAM MACMICHAEL 1784-1839

AUTHOR OF
"THE GOLD-HEADED CANE" - 1827

My name is 25-R-500. Until one day in the spring of 1923, I occupied a sedate position at Granger Frères, on Notre Dame St. This was a heavenly home. The perfume of imported French books and of those published in our fair province mixed with the aroma of church incense and candles to give the atmosphere a holy air. My own pages were numbered and lined, but nothing had yet been written on them. I felt marked for life on earth, but I was in heaven, as yet unborn. ^{one day in April, 1923,} Then ^{my} day arrived and I was brought into the world, in the usual manner, by an obstetrician. As he took me out through the door of Granger Frères and carried me to a destination which was unknown to me, I was not afraid. Jostled by people on the street, bumped up and down in a conveyance which he drove, my interest and curiosity were aroused, I felt alive!

That evening he exposed me at page number one and we began a long and happy acquaintance. He is a youngish man who in spite of his boldness, appears younger than his age. The blue eyes, large and frank, the blonde hair and skin tell the story of his Nordic ancestry. The high broad forehead widening as it rises, the quiet pensive expression mark him as a student and idealist. His awfully irregular, but yet not clumsy handwriting reveal the physician and artist. I liked him then, at first sight, I always will be fond of him. We looked at each other and then he told me about my fate. For as long as my pages presented empty lines, I would continue to attend meetings of a new medical society which he and some confreres, all of the Jewish Community, faith, race or nationality, had conceived, hatched and otherwise created.

At a meeting held in the Mount Royal Hotel, on April 10, 1923, Dr. Samuel Ortenberg, who presided, declared it was high time that such a society should be formed. Local Jewish medical men needed to get together to learn from one another. The Montreal Jewish Community had some fifty good doctors and the Herzl Dispensary, but they had no Hospital. These physicians should work together in order to have a hospital built. Jewish girls with ambitions to follow the path of Florence Nightingale, need a hospital. Industrial and professional workers in all other fields of human endeavour were organizing, were uniting; the Jewish doctors of Montreal should unite. Dr. Maxwell Lightstone, roused by these eloquent statements moved formally that all present at the meeting should organize themselves into a medical society. He was seconded by Dr. Trossman and as the motion was passed unanimously, officers were elected. Dr. Norman Viner became the president, Dr. Max Rabinovitch, vice president and my own obstetrician, friend and master Dr. Nathan Freedman, was unanimously chosen the secretary treasurer.

The first regular meeting was held on April 25, 1923 at the Herzl Dispensary at Milton and St. Urbain streets. I remember that evening very well; I experienced fright for the first time in my life. My Master was carrying me, we had just entered through the short vestibule when I was shocked by a terrific, cracking, slapping noise. My Master turned to look behind him and was reassured when he saw it was merely Dr. Trossman, arriving behind us, who had shut the door. Dr. Trossman,

the hearty bon vivant, is a vibrant personality and all things about him vibrate with "la joie de vivre".

The meeting occupied itself first with chewing over the constitution which had been concocted by the executive. It had been done up in fine taste. Purpose number one of the society, to increase the medical knowledge of its members; number two, to stimulate medical research; number three, to improve the health and increase the longevity of the community; number four, to encourage all practical efforts towards the erection of a Jewish General Hospital; number five, to conserve the established principles of Ethical medicine; number six, to regulate Medico-Economic difficulties when deemed advisable, and finally number seven, to maintain harmony between members of the profession. Dr. Lauterman and Dr. Carl Ruby objected to number six, they did not think that Medico-Economic difficulties existed or could exist or that if they existed it was their opinion that the society could do little or nothing to regulate them. All the other men thought otherwise, such troubles were rampant and the new society must try to solve these problems. All seven purposes were adopted, on motion of Dr. Maxwell Lightstone seconded by Dr. Wiseman, both of whom showed themselves to be Masters of parliamentary technique.

The choice of a name for the society presented some difficulty. There were a few who wanted to give it a Hebrew name or at least attach a Hebrew motto to its escutcheon. However, the great majority favoured a distinctly non-Jewish name and did not care to be bothered with the architecture of a coat or arms. Finally,

Dr. Lauterman moved and Dr. Wiseman seconded that the name should be "The Montreal Clinical Society". This was adopted.

I was very glad when all this business had been settled and Dr. Norman Viner introduced Dr. Louis Notkin, the medical speaker of the evening. He read a paper on Accessary Food Factors, called Vitamins; he told us about the evolution of knowledge concerning these substances and alluded to the great progress that had been made in recent years by chemists and physiologists. The discussion which followed showed clearly that Dr. Ortenberg was right when he said the Jewish physicians needed to get together to learn from each other. Everybody had something to teach. Then, too, the last thing that happened that evening pleased me very much. Dr. Eidlow moved that the society should express its thanks to Dr. Samuel Ortenberg and to my Master for their efforts in bringing about the organization of the society. General applause greeted this thoughtful motion which demonstrated that the society would help to maintain a friendly spirit among its members.

When a new society is formed, the organizers bring in all their friends and then the entrance requirements are raised. Thus Dr. Jacob Segal introduced a motion which was passed at the second regular meeting to the effect that my Master should examine the applicants and decide if they are worthy of becoming members.

At the third meeting, a committee of seven was appointed to study and improve the relations between sick benefit societies and their physicians. Much was hoped for, the committee worked hard

and evolved a set of rules that were fair too all concerned. Each physician would receive no more but no less than \$1200 a year. All the doctors except one agreed to adhere to this rule. Because of this one exception, the plan had to be abandoned.

The first meeting which followed the summer holidays was rather a disappointment. Dr. Norman Viner, my Master and a very few others were present, so few that there was no quorum and the meeting was cancelled. Two weeks later, there were twelve men present and a regular meeting was held at which Dr. Messinger described a case of "Multiple Arthritis" and Dr. C.J. Gross delivered a paper on "Some Diagnostic Problems in Syphlis". A fortnight after this Society mourned the sudden death of Dr. C.J. Gross, our first casualty.

The first guest speaker, Dr. J.R. Goodall, appeared at the ninth meeting. He spoke artistically and described the dramatic beneficial effects from the injection of whole blood subcutaneously in cases of puerperal sepsis. My Master had felt confident that there would be a large attendance but only 19 members came to this meeting. Something had to be done to attract larger numbers to the meetings, and so at the following meeting my Master presented a paper on the "Determination of Sex" and Dr. Norman Viner spoke on "Modern Trends in Psychiatry". There were 18 men present.

2 The last meeting of the first year was held in the home of Dr. Viner. The election of officers was quiet and very orderly. Dr. Viner and my Master were returned to their offices by acclamation. Dr. Max Rabinovitch was chosen vicepresident and

Drs. Eidlow, Ortenberg, Hershberg, Mendel and J. Leavitt were elected members of the executive committee. Dr. and Mrs. Viner provided delicious refreshments and there was entertainment; comical songs by several male and female singers, and a demonstration of speaking by means of eyeball movements by a Mr. Honyman and his daughter. Dr. Viner thus started the tradition which calls for a treat from the president at the end of each year.

I have often heard my Master say that a horse may be led to the trough but he cannot be made to drink. Good programs had been arranged for January 9 and January 23rd, 1924, but the meetings had to be cancelled for lack of a quorum of 12 members.

At the next meeting a motion was passed which reduced the number of a quorum to ten and later it was again reduced to six. However, such small audiences became very exceptional and there were no more cancellations of meetings after May 19, 1924, when the business phase of each meeting began to be concerned with plans for building a Jewish General Hospital. The attendance rose to between 18 and 24 even on the coldest and stormiest nights. Was this because of the good programs or because there were prospects of taking an active part in discussions about plans for having the hospital built?

On Sept. 10, 1924, Dr. Viner summarized the activities of the society since its inception and referred to the prospect of building a hospital at that time as apparently hopeless; but all agreed that a program of educating the community should be carried out. A committee of five to plan this program was appointed, namely, Drs. A. Bercovitch, Eidlow,

Max Rabinovitch, Illievitz and Ortenberg.

On Oct. 29, 1924, there was a large attendance of 24 members. This time, the drawing card was not the hospital project by a paper by Dr. Sanford M. Rosenthal, of Johns Hopkins, and his work on the Study of Liver function. He surprised me by his youthful appearance, he charmed me with his soft southern accent, and his erudition and wisdom were inspiring to those who attended that meeting. There was the best reason for having a Jewish Hospital where each of the men could engage in research. Each man felt he was not doing such work as Dr. Rosenthal had carried on in Baltimore, mainly because opportunities were lacking in Montreal.

The Hospital Committee had started its activities, energetically. It communicated with the Hebrew Maternity Hospital Committee. The two groups joined forces. To show their active good will the members of the Clinical Society began to pledge subscriptions. On Nov. 26, 1924, 12 men pledged \$4,100 and by Dec. 10th, 1924, \$14,000 had been pledged. Thus the last meeting of the second year which again took place at Dr. Norman Viner's home was a large happy party of 29 men. Hopes were high for the great achievement. The election of officers was quite simple, Drs. Viner, Max Rabinovitch and Nathan Freedman were re-elected to their respective offices. Drs. Bercovitch and Greenspon replaced Drs. Hershberg and Leavitt on the executive committee. The refreshments were abundant, delicious and stimulating, and a Mr. Goldberg sang French Canadian songs.

During these first twenty months, there were occasions when I thought that my period of usefulness would soon come to an end.

On Jan. 23, 1924, my Master had reached the 32nd page; there remained 468 pages which I thought he might use as a personal diary or to keep the record of his accounts, on worse luck his children might use them to scribble their lessons. But at the end of 1924, when I became aware of the energetic, persistent, indomitable Dr. A. Bercovitch, of the enthusiasm in large numbers of men who later did major work in building the foundations for the creation of a Jewish General Hospital, I began to wish that my Master would use a smaller handwriting, I objected to his extravagance when he left many of my lines empty to start a new page for each meeting and I protested vigorously when his successors adopted the practice of writing only on one side of each page. My life was becoming more and more exciting and I wanted it to be as long as possible, Each year saw the addition of new members; nearly all of these young men returned to their home city after spending some years in postgraduate education in the United States and in Europe. Some had been appointed to positions at the Montreal General or the Royal Victoria Hospital and in 1926, one was appointed on the staff of clinical teachers of the McGill Medical Faculty. This new young blood promised a vigorous growth and great usefulness of the society. I felt that the society would live and thrive.

During the five years from Nov. 1924, when the sum of \$4,100 was pledged by 12 doctors and Sept. 1929 when the Jewish Community responded generously to the call for money with which to build a Jewish General Hospital, I witnessed the most exciting events of my fifteen years of life on this earth.

Important meetings with sympathetic laymen would be planned for weeks or months ahead. The reports from our committee about these meetings held the members' attention more intensely than any scientific discussion. The election of committees and of the officers at the end of each year became spirited events. The medical programs improved progressively. Men who were ambitious, who had had the advantages of good post-graduate training showed their stuff at the meetings. In March, 1929, when the sympathy of the influential members of the Jewish Community had been won and the prospect of building a Jewish Hospital was quite bright, Dr. Emmanuel Libman was our guest at a brilliant banquet. Fifty-six men attended. They were all attired in dinner jackets, including my first Master as well as the man who functioned as secretary (Harold Segall).
in 1929^A Dr. Libman encouraged, and inspired the men to practice clinical medicine as an art and as a science worth a man's greatest efforts. He remained in Montreal several days and was the guest of the laymen's hospital committee at luncheon^A at the Ritz Carlton Hotel. The Montefiore Club. Remarks on this occasion contributed largely to encouraging the laymen to adopt the idea of building the hospital.

After the campaign for collection of the hospital building fund was successfully completed, five years elapsed before the hospital was officially opened. The society visited the hospital and had its first meeting in what is now the waiting room of the outdoor department on Nov. 8, 1933. Then it returned to holding meetings at the Herzl Dispensary until about a year later when the regular practice of holding our meetings in the lecture Hall of the Hospital was established with the kind permission of the hospital administration.

This first regular meeting at the Jewish Hospital on Dec. 14, 1934 was the largest the society had had; there were 106 in the audience and the speaker was Dr. Samuel A. Levine of Boston, who presented an address on the relation between the thyroid gland and heart disease. In the next $3\frac{1}{2}$ years equally large audiences attended meetings on a number of occasions. The average attendance rose to about fifty at each meeting.

One of the by-laws of the first Constitution which was passed in 1923 stipulated that no member should hold the office of president for more than two consecutive terms. Dr. Viner was the first president. This by-law was waived aside on two occasions, and each one of these it was to elect Dr. Viner. Thus he served as president of the society in 1923, 1924 and 1925; then came Dr. Max Rabinovitch in 1926, Dr. A. Bercovitch in 1927 and 1928, the most critical years of the Hospital educational campaign, Dr. Ortenberg in 1929 and Dr. Viner again in 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933 and 1934. This marathon was interrupted by Dr. Goldbloom, who served in 1935, followed by Dr. Lazinski in 1936 and the year which closes on May 17, 1938 was served by Dr. Harold N. Segall.

Thus, for eight of the 15 years, Dr. Viner was the president. If the society should ever be in need of a good president, let me recommend Dr. Viner. If the society should ever want to initiate the building of another hospital, let me recommend Dr. A. Bercovitch as the leader of the campaign. The society has yet to find the man or men who could solve some of the medico-economic problems it is being faced with. Its scientific

meetings must and shall improve from year to year, now that facilities for post-graduate work exist and are being developed.

In the spring of 1925, a letter was received by my Master from a Mrs. Caplan. She wrote to tell the society how very much she admired our efforts to have a Jewish Hospital built. For many^{years} this had been the consuming passion of her life; she had gone about from house to house in Jewish districts, begging, asking, demanding contributions to her fund for the Jewish Hospital. True to the ancient Jewish Tradition that no-one must be turned away with an empty hand who asks for help, she was given pennies, nickles and sometimes dimes. She told us that she had accumulated a fund of several thousand dollars which she would be happy to place at the disposal of the official hospital committee. Somewhere in the Jewish General Hospital, as it stands today, preferably in the admitting office, a tablet should be placed, commemorating this woman's idealism and self sacrifice. The members of the society who were enthusiastic in their efforts to win the co-operation of influential laymen must have appeared quite as pixylated as the dear old lady who hoped to create a hospital fund by collecting pennies, nickles and dimes.