

In the comments with which Dr. Michelson ended his review of the past Congresses of Dermatology (see News section, page 511), he discussed the functions of international congresses and the reasons why they are perpetuated. The following is taken virtually verbatim from his article, (with permission), with one or two omissions and the italicizing of two sentences. The words "dermatologists" and "dermatology" might readily be substituted by "leprologists" and "leprology."

"As one reads through the proceedings of Congress after Congress and notes a more or less traditional procedure, one is bound to ask himself why and how were these Congresses perpetuated. Did not the national meetings suffice to furnish the stimulation and the opportunity for expression? Did leaders feel the great need for an international rostrum, or did they wish to compare and evaluate not only foreigners but themselves? Undoubtedly, many influences, both personal and national, are brought to bear in order to organize and offer an international gathering open to all dermatologists. That they have continued must mean that they fill a need and are valuable. That they are so well attended at great expense of time and money, must mean that they are wanted and will continue.

"International Congresses rarely offer new and original works. The essayists are chosen because they have demonstrated unusual

ability before, especially in the subjects that they are invited to discuss. Papers given at the Congresses are not often quoted as sources in dermatological literature. If one looks back over some of the big discoveries . . . one realizes that at the best only a report of work done before could be offered at a Congress. A scientist who is destined to produce an epic-making discovery does not keep his work a secret awaiting an International Congress to make his discovery known. Therefore, we must not expect an International Congress to be the place to display original or new work. *The Congress is a meeting where composite opinion is exposed to an international group of critics for discussion and elaboration.*

“One wonders why, at the end of a Congress, a committee is not appointed to evaluate the Congress and to report on the outstanding papers that were offered. Each Congress has had some outstanding reports. Some were positively startling; for example, the first report of the use of roentgen rays on the skin, but that paper did not seem to provoke any unusual acclaim.

“The Congresses have extraordinary historic value. They have great social and medical value. . . . They offer a common ground where people of different nationalities, different ideologies, and different viewpoints can be brought together for a better understanding and respect for each other.”—H. W. W.