

CORRESPONDENCE

HALF A CENTURY OF PROGRESS IN ORTHOPAEDIC SURGERY IN LATIN AMERICA

From DR JOSE MANUEL DEL SEL, BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

To the Editor,
Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery.

DEAR SIR,

The November issue of the British Volume entitled "Half a Century of Progress in Orthopaedic Surgery" is an admirable effort to show what has been done all over the world in the past fifty years. Perhaps it is unfortunate that no reference was made to orthopaedic surgery in Latin America.

As you know, in Buenos Aires and São Paulo, orthopaedic surgery has been a recognised speciality for over a quarter of a century. Luis A. Tamini, a disciple of Codivilla, and Rezende Puech were the first Professors of Orthopaedics in the Latin American Republics. Soon after, in 1924, under the influence of Vittorio Putti, first in Argentina and then in many other countries, orthopaedic surgery spread, hospitals and departments were built, and new Chairs were created in Cordoba, La Plata and Rosario in Argentina, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Bahia in Brazil, etc. Mexico and Cuba, more influenced by the vicinity of U.S.A., had in Juan Farill and Alberto Inclán the pioneers of this field, and at the moment every Latin American country has a group of leading orthopaedic surgeons.

The various journals of the speciality being published (four at present) have been spreading information concerning the development of this branch of surgery. The *Revista de Ortopedia y Traumatologia*, Buenos Aires, founded in July 1930 by José Valls, has already achieved twenty volumes and contains, as well as important papers, summaries in English, French and Italian, with an extensive bibliography. The *Cirurgia Ortopedica y Traumatologia*, Cuba, is nearly as old, and there are two other recent publications: *Anales de Ortopedia y Traumatologia* of Montevideo and of Mexico. Nine Latin American countries have their own Societies of Orthopaedic Surgery, the "Sociedad Argentina de Ortopedia y Traumatologia" having published fifteen volumes of its proceedings. The "Sociedade Brasileira de Ortopedia e Traumatologia" held a Congress last year attended by about 150 delegates.

Notable contributions have been made in many of the twenty countries which constitute Latin America. Books and papers published in those Journals, and in the Journals of the English-speaking countries, have shown their importance.

Valls and Ottolenghi were the first to advocate biopsy of the regional lymph nodes for confirmation of the diagnosis of tuberculosis of bone and joint as early as 1931.

Fractures of the neck of femur have received special attention from Latin American specialists. Valls and Lagomarsino were "rapporteurs" at Berlin but although the Congress was never held the publication was delivered. Their method was better known after the appearance of their beautifully illustrated book. The Valls and Lagomarsino guide is still used at the Rizzoli Institute after over fifteen years and in several clinics in Europe and America. The treatment of fractures of the neck of the femur has also other outstanding South American workers in Godoy Moreira of São Paulo, Brazil, whose screw and other devices for grafting are important mechanical contributions, and in Jose L. Bado of Montevideo, whose experience of grafting of the neck of the femur is almost certainly unrivalled in any other country.

Skeletal traction in the years since Steinmann-Codivilla has received many modifications of detail but it should not be forgotten that in 1915 E. Finochietto of Buenos Aires described his well-known stirrup followed by innumerable appliances created by his remarkable mechanical sense; nor must one forget L. Zeno of Rosario, S.F.; and especially C. Ottolenghi, whose book on skeletal traction is to be considered the most complete study of the subject.

Important observations have also been reported on echinococcosis of bone and on brucellosis.

Morquio from Uruguay was the first to describe the osteochondrodystrophy well known by this eponym.

Bone tumours have been intensively studied. Piñeiro Sorondo and Ferré have described a technique well known for hindquarter amputation. Valls, Ottolenghi and Schajowicz have done much work on the early diagnosis of tumours by aspiration biopsy, especially for pathological conditions of the spine, using the Ottolenghi device, which has led to a better knowledge of reticulum cell sarcoma, epiphysial chondroblastoma and fibrous dysplasia of bone.

Refrigerated homogenous bone grafting has received important attention since the pioneer work of Alberto Inclán from Havana, Cuba (which is the only quotation of Latin American origin in the *Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery* in Leo Mayer's review), and notably by Velazco Zimbron of Mexico, who has produced what might well be the most complete experimental and clinical study up to the present time.

Finally I should mention Gebauer in Chile, who organised traumatology there, and Urrutia, well known for his personality and his special mechanical mind, and again Juan Farill from Mexico, known for his contributions on congenital deformities and especially as the father and the first President of the Latin American Society, founded in 1948, whose first Congress in December 1950 in Montevideo—Buenos Aires—Mar del Plata was attended by 250 delegates. The maturity of orthopaedic surgery was well demonstrated in that part of the world exactly in the mid-century!

Excuse me, Sir, for the length of this letter, though to do justice to the subject it would need to be longer and require preparation. It has not been my purpose merely to quote names, but, influenced by the spirit of your review, I have been stimulated to attempt to trace the development of orthopaedics in Latin America.

Yours very truly,

April 1951.

JOSE MANUEL DEL SEL.

[Dr Jose del Sel has kindly and gracefully drawn attention to an omission that we much regret. We are grateful for the gentleness of his rebuke and the excellence of his report of orthopaedic progress in Latin America. He also is guilty of omission, for modesty has prevented him mentioning his own distinguished part in the development of surgery—a most important part in the great development of the South American Republics in every field of human endeavour, not least that of orthopaedics.—EDITOR.]