

THE SEMINAR

Only students who have taken the Science course at the Medical School have any idea of what goes on when one of their fellow members delivers a seminar, so this article is being written with the view of informing the rest of what really happens.

Mr. X has been writing up his paper for the last eight weeks. He writes what he concedes to be a perfect seminar, and takes it to his tutor, Mr. P. This gentleman's knowledge of the subject of the seminar is nil. He endeavours to gain enlightenment by reading Mr. X's paper and is not rewarded. In despair he suggests that Mr. X should make a few alterations. These involve changing the introduction, the conclusion, and all the rest of the paper, except the title. Mr. X accepts as many of Mr. P's suggestions as he cannot get out of in any way. Having re-written his paper he takes it to Dr. A., who he hopes may be a bit more helpful and sympathetic. Dr. A. knows exactly nothing about the subject; he has been hoping against hope to get some information about it on the day of the delivery. However, he feels called upon to suggest that Mr. X should further consult the "Wistar Cards" and then re-write part of his paper. The part, on examination, turns out to be everything except the title, which, like the Laws of the Medes and Persians, altereth not.

Every morning Mr. X is greeted with "Well, and how's the Seminar going?" to which one of the other members of the clan will answer "O.K., thanks to Dr. and Nurse."

About 24 books have been consulted, and Mr. X finds himself in a really bad way. He is a martyr and unfortunately he is the only one who realises this.

The last week has arrived. The chief performer puts forward his last spurt and sits up till one a.m. every morning. Writing his Seminar up neatly, putting the finishing touches to his work of heart. He learns the introduction off by heart, then stands up in the middle of the room and gives himself a wonderful Seminar. His actions bring tears to his eyes (red from lack of sleep) and his heart aches—he sits down panting—it's too much for him. He goes to bed and is con-

vinced that he will make a wonderful impression on Friday.

At last the day of delivery is here. Early that bright and sunny morning he is up and doing and goes over the last points. He makes up his mind not to be nervous and feels like Napoleon before the battle of Waterloo.

At 11 o'clock all the members of the Science class are in their places at the table. Dr. A. arrives, then Dr. G. The stage is set and in comes Professor Y. We all rise and Mr. X begins his Seminar. He starts off in the good old way, and with shaking fingers and quivering voice, opens with the words: "Professor Y, Dr. A, Dr. G and fellow-students—the subject for this morning's Seminar is 'The Nature and Significance of the Scope of Experimental Embryology and its Functional Adaptation to Environment'" (the last few words, incidentally, being used in connection with anything that happened to be discussed in the Science class at any time.)

Everybody is busy with pencil and paper and are doing their best to criticise Mr. X's Seminar. Miss A looks at what Mr. B next to her is writing, but he quickly turns the paper the other way.

Mr. X is nearing the end. Some of his fellow-students have nearly fallen asleep. Mr. X's nervousness and fighting have given place to self-confidence so everybody knows it must be nearly over. They quickly write up some sort of a criticism and await their turn to speak. Mr. X is proud of himself; he delivers a marvellous conclusion (the best part of the Seminar as with the introduction, is the only part understood by the company, he sits down with a sigh of relief. The time is ripe for criticisms to be hurled at him and he knows nothing will be left unsaid. Fellow-students on the right criticise subject matter, those on the left, the presentation (i.e., delivery).

Mr. B starts off: "I must congratulate Mr. X on his Seminar. It was very interesting (lie) and full of new points to remember (another lie) but as far as the subject goes he might have given some time to the functional adaptation part—I didn't quite understand

what he was driving at" (neither did he).

Mr. D.: Repeats what has been said by Mr. B, thinks a lot more but doesn't say it.

Miss H.: Repeats what has been said by Mr. B and Mr. D: Congratulates Mr. X on his Seminar but forgets to add that it wasn't a Seminar at all.

Dr. G: "I must agree with Mr. B that the Seminar was this, that and the other, and wasn't this, that and the other. Mr. X, you see, omitted to say that the scope of experimental embryology was one of the widest subjects to study." Dr. G is off on his favourite topic—Embryology, and he gets absolutely lost in it. The fellow-students are trying their best not to be bored. The thought of lunch keeps them alive.

The fellow-students on the left have now to criticise presentation.

Miss D: Mr. X's nervousness detracted a great deal from the Seminar. Learnt a lot of

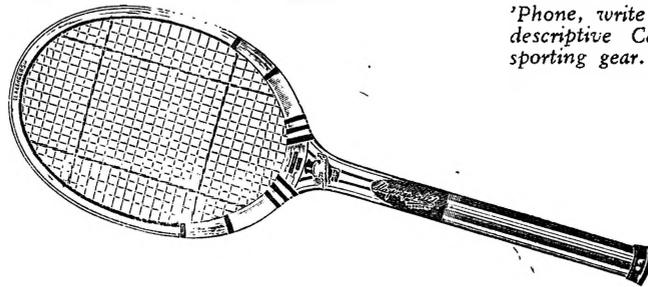
new and astonishing (quite correct) facts.

The story goes on. Miss G, Mr. C, Mr. R, Mr. S all shower their congratulations on Mr. X, but secretely wonder what the hell its all been about.

Dr. A: Now er—, Mr. X spoke a lot about the scope and forgot to say something er— about the significance er— of experimental embryology, er— (now, now, Dr. A.).

It is now Professor Y's turn to criticise the Seminar. He talks about the Seminar for two minutes and by some way, known only to himself, gets on to the subject nearest his heart "NATURE" (where, oh where, has the Seminar gone, where, oh where can it be?) The fellow-students sit up—this is the best part of the Seminar.

Fellow-students, it won't be long now. All wait for Professor Y to sit down, then with a sigh of relief, they all rise—a Seminar has been delivered.
Ex B.Sc., 1933.



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