

BIOGRAPHY

Eminent French Scientist Present at Own Centenary

Dr. Guéniot's Father, in 1832, Worried About State Of World and Prophesied Short Life for His Son

CELEBRATING the centenary of an eminent scientist is not unusual. The French Academy of Medicine, however, has just had the unique opportunity of celebrating the centenary of one of its living members, Dr. Alexandre Guéniot, eminent obstetrician, surgeon and author, and former president of the Academy.

Dr. Guéniot was an erect, alert figure, smiling attentively at the kindly speeches which one distinguished orator after another delivered. They all read their carefully prepared addresses. But when it came turn for Dr. Guéniot to reply, he jumped up lightly from his chair, and delivered the opening sentences of his speech without any reference to his manuscript. Afterwards he sat down and read a short paper, the

whimsical wit of which made this assembly of the most eminent savants of France rock with laughter.

In the course of a presentation of a medal of the town of Paris by the Chairman of the Municipal Council, it was pointed out that a facsimile had been presented to a really old man of 117 years at the inauguration of the statue of Louis XIV in the Place des Victoires. In allusions to the centenarian's comparative youthfulness, he was reminded that Hippocrates had reached the age of 109, and that in 1809 Napoleon had received in audience a doctor born in 1690.

The day after Alexandre Guéniot was born, his father wrote to an intimate friend:

"I do not know whether to be happy or sorry over the birth of a son to which I have contributed only a modest share.

The poor infant enters the world in very troubled times. Hardly 17 years have passed since peace was restored to Europe, and we still suffer cruelly from the effects of the war. Who knows if my son will not one day be forced to become the citizen of a republic? It makes one shudder. The conditions of life are daily becoming more difficult. Nanette, our servant, has paid 23 sous for half a kilo of butter, and 2 sous for each fresh egg! It is absurd and exorbitant!

"I would like to see my son embracing the noble career of medicine, but I see quite well that he cannot; one of the Heads of the Faculty has confided to me that this profession is literally invaded. And then, this madness of speed is wearing out men. Only yesterday I saw a post chaise tearing along. It makes one giddy! The horses were galloping at more than 5 leagues an hour. And everyone wants his carriage! The streets of Paris are so congested that you must wait a long time if you wish to cross them. Madness of the century, my dear friend, for which men will pay in the brevity of their days.

"My son, like his contemporaries, will not live to be old. We know not what the future has in store for him, but we can bet with certainty on his not becoming a centenarian."

Science News Letter, December 10, 1932



PRESENT AT OWN CENTENARY

The unique celebration of the centenary of a living scientist, Dr. Alexandre Guéniot, has just been held at the French Academy of Medicine.

PSYCHOLOGY

More Drivers Obey Laws At Light-Controlled Corners

AT LIGHT-CONTROLLED corners 85 per cent. of drivers obey the laws, but at corners where arterial stop signs are placed practically half the drivers violate traffic rules. These facts were among those reported by William A. Van Duzer, director of vehicles and traffic in the District of Columbia.

Mr. Van Duzer had stationed observers to watch the behavior of motorists at many typical intersections in the city of Washington, D. C., with a view to finding out which traffic laws and regulations were commonly disregarded and which were perhaps unreasonable. The speed of motorists was measured with the aid of an ingenious L-shaped box containing a mirror. When a motorist passes the box, a flicker in the mirror is seen by the observer stationed at a definite distance away. The observer can then time with a stop watch the car's

progress from the box to the observer.

On arterial streets where the speed limit is 22 miles per hour, from 70 to 94 per cent. of the drivers were driving above the limit. On one of these streets, 94 per cent. drove above the limit, more than half between 20 and 30 miles per hour, but only 15 per cent. above 35 miles per hour.

Mr. Van Duzer pointed out that a reasonable rate which most drivers would be willing to observe on this street is near the 30-mile limit. Traffic officers cannot enforce a speed regulation disregarded by 94 per cent. of the drivers, he said.

The observation of stop signs was also recorded. Less than half those passing stop signs actually made a complete stop. A partial stop under control was made by 32 per cent., and 24 per cent. entered without stopping.