results of clinical trials of raspberry leaf extracts. A standard method for the purification of such extracts should lead to more definite results from them.

The comparison of two types of assay for tincture of digitalis, the 18-hr. frog method and a chemical method using 3 : 5-dinitrobenzoic acid, has shown that the biological assay of this material is still the only sure way of ascertaining potency. Search for a means of characterizing sulphonamides by examination of their benzaldehyde and salicylaldehyde derivatives not only achieved the required results but also led to a rapid colorimetric method for the assay of sulphadimidine.

Two papers were read dealing with spectroscopy, one a general outline of infra-red techniques and the other on the determination of vitamin D.

The diverse chemical nature of synthetic analgesics led to a review of their stereochemistry, when it was found that the more analgesically active isomer of optical enantiomorphs has a spatial configuration related to that of D-(−)-alanine. The isolation, purification and identification of the constituents of the petrol extract of serpentary formed the basis of one paper, which illustrated the vast amount of work that still remains to be done before the true nature of many of the drugs in common use is elucidated.

Two new assay techniques were reported, one for benzathine penicillin and the other for quaternary ammonium compounds.

It was argued on statistical grounds that some of the present standards for surgical dressings given in the British Pharmaceutical Codex need review, in that in some cases the exacting specifications take no account of variations which are bound to occur in manufacture and can easily be measured and limits imposed.

With the increasing use of the tablet as a convenient method of dispensing solid drugs, it is not surprising to find the symposium session of the Conference devoted to tablets, when the preparation, standardization and dispensing of them were fully discussed.

GIOVANNI MARIA LANCISI (1654–1720)

ANATOMIST, pathologist, epidemiologist, sanitarian and clinician, and one of the most advanced thinkers in the history of the medical sciences, Giovanni Maria Lancisi was born in Rome three hundred years ago, on October 26, 1654. He studied medicine at the Collegio di Sapienza, where he obtained his doctor's degree at the age of eighteen. After serving for two years as assistant physician at the Santo Spirito Hospital, he was made a canon of the Church of San Salvatore College in 1678 and devoted himself to studying the medical classics. In 1684 he was appointed professor of anatomy at the Collegio di Sapienza and thirteen years later professor of the theory and practice of medicine. A great admirer of Boerhaave, he introduced his clinical methods into medical teaching. He was physician to three successive popes : Innocent XI, Innocent XII and Clement XI. It was at Clement's request that in 1707 he wrote his monumental treatise "De subitaneis mortibus", in which he carefully records the pathological lesions of the brain and heart observed at autopsy, gives the first description of syphilis of the heart and of growths on the valves, and lists hypertrophy and dilatation of the heart as a cause of sudden death.

Lancisi's book, "De motu cordis et aneurysmatibus" (1728), is another landmark in the history of heart disease, for it stresses the significance of heredity, syphilis and violent emotions as causes of aneurysm. In his work "De noxiis paludum effluviis eorumque remediis" (1717) he showed remarkable insight into the theory of contagion and the possible transmission of malaria by mosquitoes. He described the natural history of the mosquito, suggested repeated examination under the microscope of the blood of malarial patients, recommended with poetic fervour cinchona bark as a remedy, and pointed out the connexion between stagnant water and mosquitoes as vectors of the disease. For the prevention of malaria he advocated the draining of marshy lands and their drying up by conservation of forests. He also wrote on equine and bovine pest.

Appreciating the relation of anatomy to sculpture and painting, Lancisi, in 1691, persuaded Bernardino Genga, professor of anatomy and surgery in Rome, to publish for the use of students his studies of anatomy made from the works of the ancients, and he himself published and edited in 1714 the "Tabulae anatomicae" of Eustachius, which had lain unused in the Vatican Library for more than 150 years. In the following year he wrote "A Correct Curriculum of Medical Studies", in which he emphasized the need of a preliminary education and the value of regular visits to other medical clinics. His library of twenty thousand rare books and manuscripts (Biblioteca Lancisiana), which he presented to the Santo Spirito Hospital in 1711 for the use of young physicians and surgeons, and for the maintenance of which he left a generous legacy, represents one of the first public medical libraries.

Paradoxically, Lancisi, whose signature is writ large on so many pages of anatomy, is eponymously commemorated solely by Lancisi's nerves—striæ longitudinales on the upper surface of the corpus callosum.

A small man with lively expression and exuberant spirits, affable and diplomatic in company, Lancisi was a tremendous worker of amazing versatility, who carried on an extensive correspondence with the most famous scientists of his day. He died in Rome on January 21, 1720, at the age of sixty-six. In the tercentennial year of his birth he is gratefully remembered chiefly for having laid the foundation for a true understanding of the pathology of the heart.

W. R. BETT

SOCIETY FOR VISITING SCIENTISTS

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1953–54

THE annual report for 1953–54 of the Society for Visiting Scientists, the seventh report of the Society, opens with an account of the financial state of the Society, which though it is disappointing is by no means hopeless, and under the energetic direction of the honorary treasurer, Prof. A. Haddow, fresh appeals will be made to the scientific industry to support the Society (preferably by deed of covenant) and to individual scientific workers to become members.

The Society's library and lounge are available to scientific societies on payment of a small fee, and