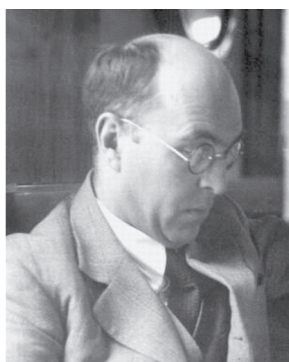


HISTORICAL REVIEW



Lujo Thaller, MD, PhD

Professor Lujo Thaller, MD, PhD, an excellent physician from our Hospital, a renowned Croatian medical professional and intellectual and our first medicine historian, died sixty years ago. Prof. Thaller graduated from the Vienna School of Medicine

in 1914 and returned to Zagreb, where he was appointed head of the Department of Medicine at our Hospital as early as 1921. At that time, Department of Medicine was already equipped with chemistry and hematology laboratory. Division of Physical Medicine and Rheumatology with 135 beds was then established, mostly owing to the great efforts invested by Prof. Thaller. In addition, Prof. Thaller was the first to divide department of internal medicine into subspecialist divisions of gastroenterology, hematology, cardiology, and physical medicine and rehabilitation mentioned above. The Department was headed by Prof. Thaller until 1941, when he was removed from his post by Ustashi authorities because of his progressive ideas¹.

Prof. Lujo Thaller was a man of broad culture and education; he fluently spoke a number of foreign languages, had earned PhD in philosophy, was an excellent orator and a gifted writer. He served as Zagreb representative for years, member of numerous Zagreb sports societies, member of Matica hrvatska, and a popular physician in Zagreb.

However, Prof. Thaller's contribution to Croatian medicine as our first medicine historian is especially appreciated. In 1927, he wrote an important and extensive paper entitled *The History of Medicine in Croatia and Slavonia 1770-1840*. In the same year, he held his

inaugural lecture in the history of medicine at Zagreb University School of Medicine. Although these lectures were not included in required subjects, Prof. Thaller's gift and enthusiasm emanating from his lectures attracted many students. Prof. Thaller dealt with biographies of our famous old physicians (Baglivi, Plenčić, Lalangue), our medieval medicine and folklore in medicine. He was a prolific writer and delivered lectures at a number of international congresses on the history of medicine, which made him known in international professional circles. That is why he was entrusted with the organization and presidency of the 11th International Congress on the History of Medicine, held in 1938 in Dubrovnik. His largest and most important work, his book entitled *Od vrača i čarobnjaka do modernog liječnika* (From Shaman and Magician to Modern Physician) appeared in the same year². The more so, merits go to Prof. Thaller for establishment of the History of Medicine Section at the Croatian Medical Association, also in 1938.

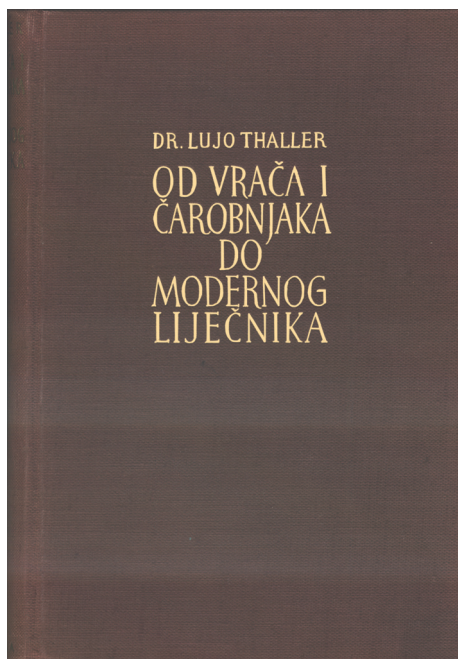
In the years to come, Prof. Thaller prepared a book on Edward Jenner and smallpox vaccination. Besides his brilliant text on the disease history, Prof. Thaller translated the original Jenner's text on smallpox and vaccination. Unfortunately, the book appeared in 1949, with a lamentable foreword in which the editorial board informed the readers on Prof. Thaller's sudden death while working that last day on his book³.

Tanja Sušec

References

1. REINER I. Povodom 75. godišnjice internog odjela u bolnici "Dr. Mladen Stojanović" u Zagrebu. *Anali Bolnice "Dr. M. Stojanović"* 1970;9:5-11.
2. THALLER L. *Od vrača i čarobnjaka do modernog liječnika. Povijest borbe protiv bolesti i smrti*. Zagreb: Minerva, 1938.
3. THALLER L. *Edward Jenner i vakcinacija velikih boginja*. Beograd, Zagreb: Medicinska knjiga, 1949.

ON NOTABLE BOOKS IN OUR HISTORY



The Historical Review appearing in this issue is dedicated to Professor Lujo Thaller, MD, and so this section is devoted to his book entitled *Od vrača i čarobnjaka do modernog liječnika* (From Shaman and Magician to Modern Physician), published in 1938 in Zagreb. The book subtitle, *The History of Struggle against Disease and Death*, indicates that the book deals with the history of medicine from prehistory to the 1930s. In his foreword, Prof. Thaller offers his definition of the history of medicine as deliberate struggle against disease. On 366 pages of the book, Prof. Thaller describes how this willful struggle has developed and treatment grown into profession and science, illustrated by a number of ancient and rare drawings and pictures. Such a huge time interval could only be properly presented and analyzed by a profes-

sional with excellent and broad education, with in-depth knowledge not only of medicine but also of ancient and modern languages, philosophy, ethics, general history, and other fields.

With this book, Prof. Thaller wanted to make the general public familiar with the history of medicine, and he did it with full success owing to his superior style and intriguing mode of presenting the sequence of significant events during the history of medicine. Dry texts on the development of particular medical disciplines are enriched with citations from literature masterworks by Shakespeare and Cervantes. For us, the story of St. Vincent de Paul, founder of a congregation of sisters, is of special interest, as his Sisters of Charity established our Hospital in 1846 and managed it until 1948. According to Prof. Thaller, St. Vincent de Paul is one of the most outstanding figures in the history of medicine, as he introduced nuns in patient care and ordinary women in medical care in general. Looking back, Prof. Thaller showed, one might say, prescient reflections, e.g., on a uniform medical language, development of medical literature, etc. Prof. Thaller's conclusive view of the future development of medicine is optimistic. He believes that future development of medicine will discover the causes of diseases and find remedies to control them. At the end, Prof. Thaller does not forget the fact that man has to find defense from himself; therefore, he says: "The only man's defense from man is to oppose love to hate because love is the most powerful weapon in any fight against evil"¹.

Tanja Sušec

Reference

1. THALLER L. *Od vrača i čarobnjaka do modernog liječnika*. Zagreb: Minerva, 1938:366.