

Society Reports

REPORT OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SECTION OF MEDICAL HISTORY IN THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (VICTORIAN BRANCH)

THE Annual Meeting of the Section of Medical History in the British Medical Association (Victorian Branch) was held on Monday, 10 April 1961, at the Medical Society Hall, Albert Street, East Melbourne. The following office-bearers were appointed for 1961:

President	Sir William Johnson
Honorary Secretary	Dr. M. L. Verso
Honorary Treasurer	Mr. J. T. Hueston
Member of Committee	Dr. Bryan Gandevia (Honorary Curator, Museum of the Medical Society of Victoria)

At the conclusion of the formal business of the evening, Dr. Bruce Robinson presented a paper, illustrated by lantern slides, entitled 'College Crests'. This paper was the sequel to an earlier one, entitled 'The Symbolism of the Caduceus', which Dr. Robinson had read before the Section.

After a short introduction in which he recapitulated a number of the points on the significance of certain symbols discussed in his earlier paper, Dr. Robinson showed a series of lantern slides illustrating the arms of several medical colleges and societies. As each slide was shown a brief account was given of the heraldic significance and the symbolic meanings of the devices portrayed in it. Among the arms shown were those of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, the Royal Australasian College of Physicians and several colleges and societies of the British Isles.

The paper gave rise to an informative discussion in which many points raised in the paper both of heraldic and historical interest were elaborated in further detail.

THE SCOTTISH SOCIETY OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

THE Thirty-Seventh Meeting and Twelfth Annual General Meeting of the Scottish Society of the History of Medicine, held on 28th October 1960, saw the election of Professor Adam Patrick as President, Dr. W. S. Mitchell (retiring President) and Mr. T. B. Mouat as Vice-Presidents; Professor Stanley Alstead and Mr. C. Kemball were elected members of Council—the Honorary Secretary and Treasurer and members of Council eligible for re-election being re-elected.

Dr. Armstrong Davison then read a paper on 'The Development of Abdominal Surgery' which is published in full in the Society's *Report of Proceedings (1960-1961)*. Dr. Davison points out that although anaesthesia appeared to be a tremendous boon, yet the immediate results were disastrous, for mortality from infection increased beyond all bounds, until the introduction of antiseptic methods in the 70s. The earliest essays in true intra-abdominal surgery were made in connexion with par-

News, Notes and Queries

turition, and the history of Caesarian section is surveyed from the earliest myths to the present time. The second major abdominal operation to be developed was that of ovariectomy, first performed by Ephraim McDowell in 1809 on Jane Todd Crawford of Kentucky. The development of operation for appendicitis was strangely slow, the first being performed in 1861, and its story belongs mainly to the post-antiseptic era of surgery. By the 1890s all the great landmarks of abdominal surgery had been passed, and all that remained was to consolidate techniques and to extend the scope of operations as the benefits of improved diagnosis, surgical techniques, anaesthesia and resuscitation began to emerge.

At the Thirty-Eighth Ordinary Meeting, held on 3rd March, Mr. G. R. Pendrill gave a talk on 'Some Historical Cases of Auto-Surgery', from notes prepared by Mr. W. J. Bishop, who was prevented from attending by illness. An extended summary of the paper is published in the Report.

At the Thirty-Ninth Ordinary Meeting, Dr. W. P. D. Wightman read a paper on the 'Life and Times of Dr. Duncan Liddel (died 1613)' which was unfortunately not ready for publication in the Report. Instead is printed a paper prepared by Mr. T. B. Mouat on 'An Eminent Victorian, Frederick John Mouat, M.D., Hon. LL.D., Edin., F.R.C.S. (1816-1879)'.

News, Notes and Queries

IN THE COURSE OF DUTY

by

J. P. J. ENTRACT

THE recent murder of a doctor in Chelsea by a person so far unknown has focused attention on a hazard of medical practice which is not, as some might imagine, unprecedented.

In January 1691/2, Dr. Andrew Clench was called from his house in Brownlow Street, Holborn, by two men on the pretext of *seeing a friend of theirs who was ill*. They took him in a coach to Leadenhall Market where they sent the driver off to buy two fowls. When the driver returned, he found the doctor slumped against the foreseat of the coach. He had been strangled by means of a handkerchief with a coal placed in it. A man named Henry Harrison was later arrested and charged. Found guilty, he was duly hanged at Tyburn. One John Cook was also charged as a suspected accomplice but acquitted for want of sufficient evidence.

Harrison had murdered Clench because the latter had refused to increase a loan of money he had made to a Mrs. Vanwicke, between whom and Harrison there had been 'a great kindness'.

Dr. Clench was a fellow of both the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal Society. Evelyn, in his Diary, mentions his melancholy end and, on a date some three years before, records a conversation he and Pepys had with Clench's 'Wondrous Child', a boy aged about twelve who could discourse learnedly and 'without any set or formal repetitions' on religion, astronomy, mathematics, geography, history, the Latin authors, and even on natural and moral philosophy and metaphysics. 'I counselled his father,' wrote Evelyn, 'not to set his heart too much on this jewel. *Immodicis brevis est aetas et rara senectus.*' (See *Munk's Roll*, 1, 419-21.)