

Society Reports

The officers of the Society for 1960-1 were elected.

President:	Dr. P. A. Tyser
Vice-President:	Professor H. A. Harris
Hon. Vice-President:	Dr. R. Williamson
Secretary:	Dr. A. J. Rook
Treasurer:	Dr. D. H. Woollam
	Mr. C. Parish
	Dr. A. S. Playfair
	The Secretary of the Caius College Medical Society.

After the Annual General Meeting Dr. W. S. C. Copeman lectured on 'Tudor Medicine and the Universities'.

KING'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THIS flourishing society, which was founded in 1948, is closely associated with the Medical School Library. In the course of the reorganization of the Library which took place after the war it was discovered that the collection contained a number of the classics of medicine. Interest thus awakened was fostered by the Librarian, Mrs. Lilian Sargeant, and by Professor Arnold Sorsby, who is at the present time the Society's President.

Meetings are held in the Library once a month during the winter session, and there has been a judicious mixture of papers by well-known medical historians and by members of the student body. The Society has not only introduced many students to the delights of medical history but has also acted as an excellent training ground for young speakers.

The number attending a meeting is rarely less than thirty and it is felt that the Society has now become a permanent and very valuable feature of life at King's.

JOHN MASSEY

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

At a meeting of the Section held on Monday, 7 December 1959, Dr. M. L. Verso presented a paper entitled 'A Review of Early French Haematology'. The greater part of the material for this paper had been taken from a comprehensive review of the blood and its disorders in the *Dictionnaire de Médecine et Chirurgie Pratique* of 1835. At that time the coming of systematic studies in morbid anatomy had not only pushed the old humoral theories of disease into the background, but had also led to the neglect of scientific studies of body fluids. Throughout the review there ran a plea for a revival of the study of body fluids as exemplified in the blood.

The topics discussed included changes in the blood in health and disease on the one hand and the effect changes in the blood had on various tissues on the other. Among the changes in the blood discussed were variations in total volume and

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alterations in such physical properties as consistency, colour, odour, taste, heat and electrical charge. The question of 'gaseous apoplexy' was mentioned and the factors influencing the formation of a 'buffy coat' were dealt with in detail. The possibility that many diseases were caused by the entry of morbid material into the circulation was exciting a great deal of interest at that time and a number of experiments on the transmission of infectious diseases were described.

In considering the effects of changes in the blood on other tissues the review discussed such things of general pathological interest as the relation of uric acid to gout, the mechanism of pus formation, and the possibility that atheromatous plaques were formed, not within the vessel walls, but in small clots adherent to the endothelium, a concept that has been revived in modern times.

In his concluding remarks Dr. Verso stressed that the main point of historical interest to be gained from this study was that at the stage of medical history under discussion, old doctrines about the nature of disease were being tested, not only by observation, but by planned experiment.

NORWEGIAN SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

THE first meeting of the year was held at Damms Bokhus, Oslo, on 24 March, when the well known Norwegian botanist, Professor Ove Arbo Høeg gave an address on the history of Norwegian medicinal herbs. After some introductory remarks on Norwegian folk medicine in general, Professor Høeg had something to say about the doctrine of 'Signatures' in connection with therapeutics. He then gave many interesting details regarding the various herbs, many of which are still used in the treatment of different ailments. It is interesting to note that not all of these herbs contain pharmacologically active substances. Finally, Professor Høeg dealt with the very interesting subject of the names given to herbs and he showed that quite different names were used for the same plant in different parts of the country.

The membership is steadily increasing and the Society enters upon its fifth year with great confidence.

BERNHARD GETZ.