

The  
Scottish Society  
of the  
History of Medicine

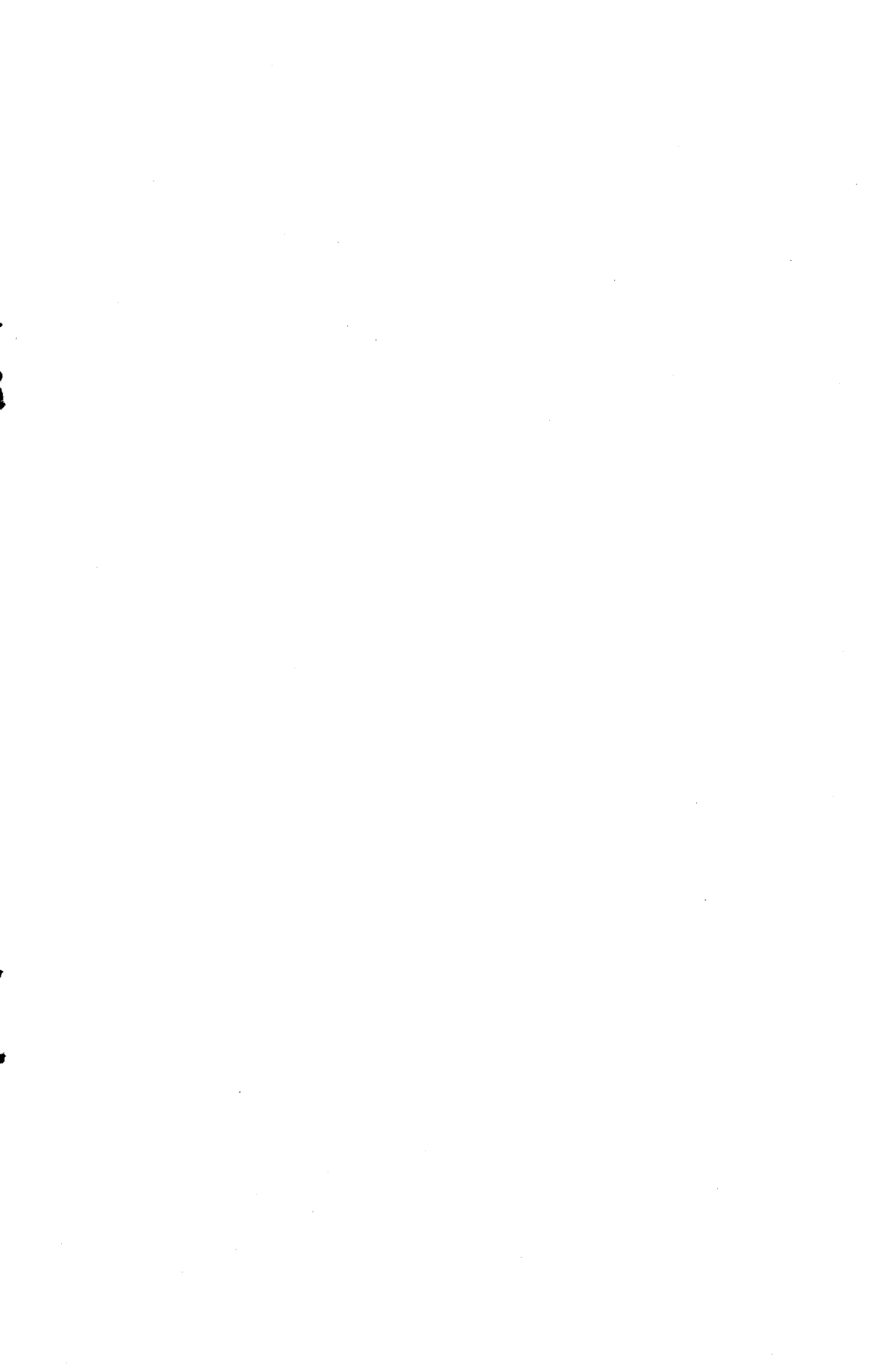
(Founded April, 1948)

REPORT OF  
PROCEEDINGS

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SESSION 1964-65

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## The Scottish Society of the History of Medicine.

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Mrs. MENZIES CAMPBELL „ 1956  
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ROYAL MEDICAL SOCIETY (ex officio).

# The Scottish Society of the History of Medicine

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## REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

1963-64

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YET another successful session has come to a close and the Society is making progress, membership being well maintained. Only two meetings were held during the year, the usual summer meeting, ordinarily held in May or June, having been postponed until September when a meeting will take place for the first time in Inverness. An account of this meeting will appear in next year's Report of Proceedings.

The Annual General Meeting was held in November, 1964, in Edinburgh when a paper was read by Dr. L. F. Howitt. The fiftieth ordinary meeting was also held in Edinburgh, this time in the Hall of the Royal Medical Society. It was felt appropriate to hold the meeting in this historic building since it would be the last occasion when it would be possible to do so because the Royal Medical Society has been compelled to vacate its present Hall this summer. It was fitting, too, that the meeting should have been held there since our President, Dr. W. A. Alexander, is Honorary President of the Royal Medical Society.

### Obituary Notices

The Society was again severely hit by the deaths of several prominent members, all of whom gave valuable and wholehearted support to its activities. Dr. W. D. D. Small, a former President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, consultant physician to the Royal Infirmary, and a noted clinician and teacher, died in Edinburgh on 27th July, 1964, at the age of 75. Mr. Matthew White, the doyen of paediatric surgery in Scotland, died on 14th September, aged 77. Dr. A. F. Wilkie Millar, a fine example of the family doctor and a well known figure in medical politics, died suddenly on 30th January, 1965, aged 79. All three were founder members of the Society as was Sir David Henderson, the distinguished psychiatrist, who died on 20th April, aged 80. His address to the Society on the History of the Royal Scottish Mental Hospitals given during session 1962-63 will long be remembered and we were privileged to print that address in full in our Report for that year. Dr. Ernest H. Duff of Selkirk died after a brief illness on 15th May, aged 57. We will sadly miss the company of these good friends and we offer our warm sympathy to their relatives.

Although he was not a member of the Society but one who took a keen interest in its doings, we cannot allow to pass unnoticed the death of Emeritus Professor Miles H. Phillips, formerly of the chair of obstetrics and gynaecology at the University of Sheffield, who died on 29th January, 1965, aged 89. Scotsmen and medical historians throughout the world are deeply indebted to Professor Phillips for he it was who bore the entire expense of the rebinding of all the books of William Smellie, the Lanarkshire man-midwife. These finely restored books now repose in a special bookcase in the Lindsay Institute at Lanark, a perpetual memorial to Smellie and to his modern disciple and ardent admirer, Miles H. Phillips. We recall, too, the generous kindness he extended to us when we were engaged in writing an account of the Smellie Library some years ago.

### Personal

Warm congratulations are offered to Professor John Craig of Aberdeen who had the degree of LL.D. conferred upon him by his Alma Mater, Aberdeen University, in July, 1964.

Our Honorary President, Dr. Douglas Guthrie, was elected first President of the newly constituted British Society for the History of Medicine at its inaugural meeting in London on 2nd June, 1965. This is a fitting tribute for all the sterling work he has done for medical history in Great Britain. His ever active pen has produced yet another important contribution to the history of medicine in Edinburgh in the account of Extramural medical education in Edinburgh (1965). Dr. W. N. Boog Watson wrote a short but attractive history of the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Association (1965) on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Association, as well as contributing a brief memoir of Lord Adam Gordon of the Burn, Glenesk (*Edin. Univ. Journ.*, 1965, 22, 35). Dr. Martin M. Whittet, physician superintendent of Craig Dunain Mental Hospital, Inverness, wrote a valuable account of the history of that hospital (1964) over the years 1864-1964, and read a paper before the Section of History of Medicine of the Royal Society of Medicine on Historical aspects of Celtic medicine (*Proc. roy. Soc. Med.*, 1964, 57, 429). Dr. A. Allan Bell has sent us a list of historical exhibits which he arranged at Gartnavel Hospital on the occasion of a meeting there of the Historical Section of the Scottish Division of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association on 4th December, 1964. Dr. John Simpson contributed a Note on epidemic disease in Shakespeare's plays (*Med. Off.* 1964, 112, 359). The ever energetic and enthusiastic Mr. Charles G. Drummond, M.P.S. gave a delightful account at a meeting in Edinburgh of the Scottish branch of the Pharmaceutical Society of Pharmacy and medicine in Georgian Edinburgh (*Pharm. Journ.* 28th March, 1965).

### Medico-Historical Notes

Dr. Guthrie has pointed out that the first medical chair to be founded at Edinburgh University, then called the Town's College, was that of botany to which James Sutherland was elected in 1695. It was an event of significance and some importance when the tenth International Congress of Botany was held in the city from 3rd-12th August, 1964. The emphasis laid on botany today was the contribution it could make towards improving the world's food supply, in contrast to the place botany occupied in earlier centuries when the doctor's interest in it was of prime importance to him as a collector and compounder of plant remedies.

To mark the centenary of the birth of Dr. Elsie Inglis a service was held on 16th August at her grave at the Dean Cemetery, Edinburgh. It was attended by her relatives, matrons past and present of the Elsie Inglis Memorial Maternity Hospital and by members of the Scottish Eastern Association of the Medical Women's Federation. Wreaths were laid on the grave while babies born in the Hospital on that day were given christening cups, suitably inscribed, by the Board of Management of the Edinburgh Southern Hospitals. A plaque is to be inserted on the wall of the new wing of the Hospital now in process of construction. A commemorative service was later held, on 1st November, at St. Giles' Cathedral at which a large and representative congregation was assembled. It was at this famous old kirk that Dr. Elsie was a member during her later years.

The Fifth British Congress on the History of Medicine and Pharmacy, under the distinguished presidency of the Lord Cohen of Birkenhead, was held in London from 16th-18th September, the theme of the meeting being the Evolution of Medical Education in Britain. The Congress was a successful one and well attended, sessions being held at Apothecaries' Hall, the new Royal College of Physicians, the College of General Practitioners, and the Royal Society of Medicine. The Honorary Secretary was privileged to be invited to read a paper at the Congress on Medical Education at the Scottish Universities to the close of the Eighteenth Century.

The Sixth Annual Report (1964-65) of the Faculty of the History of Medicine and Pharmacy of the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London, recently received, makes encouraging reading and augurs well for sustaining interest in medical history south of the border.

The Queen Mother's Maternity Hospital, Glasgow, was formally opened on 22nd September, and is closely integrated with the adjacent Royal Hospital for Sick Children with which it is connected by a link bridge. Modern in design it represents a distinct advance in maternity hospital provision in Glasgow, as well as affording facilities for teaching and research.

On 26th January, 1884, the first meeting of the Student's Representative Council at Edinburgh University was held in the Humanity Classroom in the Old College. Thus 1964 marked the eightieth anniversary of the birthday of the S.R.C. and the occasion was suitably celebrated by the publication of a "chronicle of student activity in the university" called *Eighty Years On*. The original purpose behind the organised student body at that time was to co-ordinate student activities at the tercentenary celebrations of the University and to "maintain order at the Rector's Address." Early in 1885 the S.R.C. recognised the need for a faculty of science and called for its establishment and later that year promoted a series of lectures by eminent scientists.

In September, 1964, the United States issued a commemorative stamp with the heads of the two Mayo brothers, Will and Charlie, to mark the centenary of the birth of Charlie, and the beginning of the jubilee year of the Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research.

The great age of caricature was the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, particularly in England, and it was two hundred years ago since the "father" of modern caricature, William Hogarth (born 1697) died suddenly at his home in London on 26th October, 1764. A distinguished painter, Hogarth was the first among the great artists to make caricature his main field of activity. He introduced scenes of direct medical interest into several of his series of satirical drawings. Mention need be made of only one or two of these. Plate 4 of "The Four Stages of Cruelty" shows the scene at a dissection in an anatomical theatre, while Plate 8 of "The Rake's Progress" reveals the interior of a lunatic asylum in graphic detail. His "Company of Undertakers", too, ridicules prominent members of the physicians' guild in London, as well as the three well known contemporary quacks, the Chevalier Taylor, Mrs. Mapp the bonesetter, and "Spot" Ward to whose nostrum Fielding had recourse in his last illness.

On 29th October, 1864, another caricaturist, John Leech of "Punch" died from angina pectoris. He was one of medicine's truants, having studied at Bart's. As a student his anatomical sketches were much admired and in caricature he was continually indulging at the expense of his fellow students and instructors. Having completed his training, Leech served an apprenticeship under a Haxton practitioner who, however, neglected his practice in favour of pigeon-fancying and other outdoor sports. Later Leech went as assistant to the inventor of "Cockles pills." In 1841, when "Punch" was born, Leech was so well known as to be engaged as an artist by the editor. This marked the most important period of his life and one which was to bring him world renown. Probably his best known medical contributions to "Punch", were Mr. Punch with the Flu (1847), Splendid Opening for a Young Medical Man (1848), and Fatal Facility: or, Poisons for the Asking (1849).

St. Andrews University, on 27th October, 1964, announced the names of the Academic Advisory Committee which was to plan the development of Queens' College, Dundee, as an independent university. Some time previously it had been indicated that the College would become a separate university in October 1966 or 1967. On 17th July, 1965, the Committee presented the draft of an Act of Parliament to the University Court of St. Andrews under which the separation would take place in 1967. The draft proposes that qualifying examinations in

medicine and dentistry should no longer be held by the University of St. Andrews and that any student who had matriculated in the faculty of medicine in St. Andrews should be able to graduate from the University of Dundee. This new Act, if approved, would be called the Universities of St. Andrews and Dundee Act.

Early in December, 1964, the Board of Management of the Royal Edinburgh Hospitals announced that the former hospital, West House, was being renamed Mackinnon House after the first physician-superintendent, Dr. William Mackinnon, who was appointed in 1840, and that a new unit of 160 beds was to be called the Andrew Duncan Clinic after the founder of the Hospital, Dr. Andrew Duncan senior, one of the great figures of Edinburgh medicine at the close of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In May, 1965 the Board produced a beautifully illustrated brochure *Focus on Change: The Royal Edinburgh Hospital, 1955-1965*, in which a brief sketch of the hospital from its foundation is given.

During the same month the firm of Duncan and Flockhart, celebrated pharmaceutical house, intimated that it was transferring its executive offices to London from Edinburgh. Thus a long and intimate link lasting upwards of a century and a half which the firm had with the city was severed.

In December also, an attractive illustrated booklet was received from the Wellcome Foundation, Ltd. demonstrating its many activities. It was just fifty years ago that Sir Henry Wellcome established a museum of tropical medicine in London. This museum was, in 1924, renamed the Wellcome Museum of Medical Science, and to mark this anniversary an exhibition was staged at the Wellcome Building to illustrate the history and development of the museum and of teaching methods. To medical historians, of course, the medical historical library and museum are known as great repositories of medico-historical literature and relics. The progressive director of the library and museum Dr. F. N. L. Poynter, with his usual vision and energy, arranged two most interesting special exhibitions in the museum during the year under review in this Report. One was designed to round off the quarter-centenary year of Shakespeare's birth and displays were arranged showing the works of physicians, surgeons and apothecaries of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The other, opened in May commemorated the Battle of Waterloo and among the exhibits is Napoleon's gold-plated tooth brush. It might be mentioned here that in November, 1964, it was intimated that tests carried out at Harwell and in the forensic medicine department of Glasgow University on some of Napoleon's hairs revealed the presence of arsenic. Controversy still rages over the identity of the hairs submitted to the tests. We have just been re-reading the story of the Wellcome Historical Museum, published in 1927, following the re-opening of the Museum, then in Wigmore Street, on 14th October, 1926, by Sir Humphry Rolleston. Although this book, in the familiar blue covers, is almost forty years old, it nevertheless reveals the richness of the collection then in the museum.

The centenary celebrations of Lister's great work on antiseptic surgery which are due to take place later in 1965, were, so far as Glasgow is concerned, announced in September, 1964. The centenary will be marked by a scientific meeting on subjects relating to Lister's achievement, with sessions devoted to wound infection, the biological response to injury, and wound healing. The Lister Oration will be delivered by Professor P. B. Medawar, while honorary degrees will be conferred on several distinguished men by Glasgow University. This anniversary also led us to re-read the Lister Centenary Exhibition Handbook, again in the familiar blue covers, of the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum and published in 1927, the centenary year of Joseph Lister's birth at Upton House, in Essex, on 5th April, 1827.

The announcement by the Medical Research Council of its intention to conduct trials with a measles vaccine during 1964 recalled to mind the earlier pioneer work of Francis Home, first professor of materia medica at Edinburgh University. These experiments of Home were performed during an epidemic of measles in the city during 1785. During March 1765, Home's other great work, his Inquiry into the

nature, cause, and cure of the Croup was published.

The first week of February, 1965, was the centenary of Gregor Johann Mendel's great contribution to the science of life and the *British Medical Journal* contained an editorial (1965, 1, 327) and an invited contribution by Professor Arnold Sorsby (*Ibid*, 333) on Mendel and his work.

On 17th March, the first Archibald Lamont Goodall Memorial Lecture was delivered in the Bloch Lecture Theatre, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, by our Honorary President, Dr. Guthrie. He chose as the subject of his address the Achievement of Peter Lowe, and the Unity of Physician and Surgeon. (*Scot. med. J.* 1965, 10, 261). The President, Dr. W. A. Alexander, and the Honorary Secretary were the guests of the College at this lecture. It was a moving and fitting tribute to a well-loved man who did so much for our Society and whose presence we still miss so sorely.

The Royal Medical Society, to whose affairs we alluded in last years' report, has been compelled to vacate its Hall in Melbourne Place, Edinburgh, and it is a matter of some satisfaction to record that the last meeting to be held in the historic Hall was that of the Old Edinburgh Club. This took place on 19th March, and Dr. Guthrie presided, and Dr. W. A. Alexander and Mr. Raymond S. S. Howard, Senior President of the Royal Medical Society, gave talks on the Society and its important place in the history of medicine in Edinburgh.

The close collaboration between the Medical Faculty of Edinburgh University and the Medical School of Baroda, India, is already well known. Another step in a similiar direction was announced in April by Professor Charles M. Fleming of the association of Glasgow University Faculty of Medicine with the University of East Africa and its constituent colleges, Makerere University College in Kampala, University College in Nairobi, and University College in Dar es Salaam. The best wishes of all will go to this new partnership (*Brit. med. J.* 1965, 1, 918).

Mention might be made here in passing that 26th April marked the bicentenary of the birth of Amy Lyon, better known as Emma, Lady Hamilton, friend of Lord Nelson. She had, among her many associations, one with the celebrated Dr. James Graham of temple of health fame, and is said to have been the young woman who presided over many of Graham's hare-brained schemes. It is believed that she is depicted with Graham in one of Kay's well-known Edinburgh Portraits.

We have received from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine a brochure announcing the University's intention to celebrate the bicentenary of the foundation of the medical school by Dr. John Morgan, who was appointed professor of the theory and practice of physic there on 3rd May, 1765. Morgan, an old Edinburgh medical student, thus became the founder of the first medical school in the United States. Today there are some ninety medical schools throughout the States which provide the man power for the prevention and treatment of disease, for teaching and research.

Inverpefferay Library, Perthshire, believed to be the first free public library and the oldest public lending library in Scotland, received a grant in April from the Ministry of Public Works towards the cost of external repairs. The library's old and valuable collection of between 3,000 and 4,000 volumes is threatened with dampness, and the full cost of the repairs, both internal and external, will be in the region of £6,000. A public appeal has therefore been launched to supplement the Ministry's Grant. We have visited this interesting old library, a few miles from Crieff, and inspected its collection in which, however, there is just a handful of medical books, some of them, nevertheless, date from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

We received from the Ministry of Public Health of Cuba during May an announcement that that country was proposing to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the death of the distinguished doctor, Carlos J. Finlay, discoverer of the means



of transmission of yellow fever, during 1965, and the intention to publish in early 1966 a "Finlay Bibliography." An appeal was also included for any material bearing on the life and work of Dr. Finlay.

In June, 1765, a form of treatise on domestic medicine was published. This was *Advice to the People in general with regard to their Health*, written by the French physician Tyssot and translated into English by a Dr. Kirkpatrick. This volume is interesting in that it contains a great deal of sensible advice in healthy living and compares favourably with many of the books and pamphlets of modern times on maintaining good health. In the same month there appeared Dr. Alexander Monro primus's *Account of the Inoculation of Small Pox in Scotland*. This was a letter addressed to the Dean and Faculty of Medicine at Paris appointed to enquire into the advantages and disadvantages of smallpox inoculation in response to a letter Monro had received from the Dean requesting answers to five particular questions.

A further interesting sidelight on the customs of the period regarding medical matters was the publication in the Edinburgh newspapers of 8th May, 1765 of the following resolution of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh:

"Edinburgh, May 7, 1765. The Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh, in order to support that character and esteem which they have all along maintained, and to keep up that distinction which ought to be made between the members of the College, and the practitioners of those branches of the healing-art which have always been esteemed the least reputable; do RESOLVE, That, for the future, they will admit no person to be one of their Fellows whose common business it is either to practise Surgery in general or Midwifery, Lithotomy, Inoculation, or any other branch of it in particular: And farther, That if any member of the Royal College shall, after being received a Fellow, practise any of these lower arts in the manner above mentioned and shall there be lawfully convicted, he shall be degraded from the honour conferred on him when he was admitted a Fellow, and his name shall be struck off the roll.—And that the sentiments of the College with regard to this matter may be publicly known, they order the above resolution to be inserted in the Edinburgh newspapers."

The fifty-second Annual Conference of the National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare was held in Edinburgh from 16th-18th June. This was the third occasion this important conference was held in Scotland but the first time Edinburgh was the meeting place, the previous two conferences having been held in Glasgow in 1917 and 1958 respectively. The early beginnings of the Association had many connections with Edinburgh men, not least with J. W. Ballantyne, pioneer of ante-natal care and ante-natal paediatrics, who read a paper at the first Conference in 1906. It was in 1892 that Ballantyne published his first volume of his *Diseases and Deformities of the Foetus*, the second volume appearing in 1895.

On 2nd July, 1965, the Duke of Edinburgh formally opened the £100,000 Pfizer Foundation Centre for postgraduate medical education in Edinburgh. The centre is part of a Trust which has been established between the University and the pharmaceutical firm of Pfizer, to promote international postgraduate medical education.

On 28th July, 1865, Dr. Pritchard, the Glasgow poisoner, paid the supreme penalty for his crimes by hanging in front of Glasgow Jail, the last public execution to be carried out in that city.

In the field of medical and nursing journalism, an exhibition of nursing journals was held during August, 1964, in the Nursing Studies Unit of the University of Edinburgh. It was organised by the medical section of the National Book League and was designed to provide both nurses and hospital administrators with some idea of the range of books that ought to be provided in the libraries of hospitals and school of nursing. The exhibition was called "A Basic Library for Nursing

Schools." The International Journal of Nursing Studies is a new journal published under the auspices of Edinburgh University. We offer our congratulations to the Nursing Times which, in its issue of 7th May, 1965, completed its diamond jubilee.

The Pergamon Press announced in November, 1964, that it proposed to publish *Clio Medica* in January, 1965. This journal, published under the auspices of the International Academy of the History of Medicine, is intended to be published quarterly, and libraries, government establishments, research institutions, private individuals may subscribe to the journal as well as members of the International Academy of the History of Medicine.

### Book and Other Notices

As in past years these notices refer only to books which we have personally some knowledge or acquaintance or to which our attention has been drawn by members of the Society. It is becoming increasingly difficult finding the time to peruse, even perfunctorily, so many of the books which have an interest, great or less, to medical historians, but the following notes deal with some of these volumes.

*Both sides of the Hill* (1964) by Lord Hill of Luton, is, of course, the racy autobiography of the former Dr. Charles Hill, radio doctor and secretary of the British Medical Association at the time of the discussions preceding and succeeding the introduction of the National Health Service, and later the doctor turned politician; *Surgeon James' Journal—1815* (1964) is the record of the experiences of Haddy James, a pupil of John Abernethy at St. Bart's, and who later, as a surgeon serving with the Life Guards, worked under Wellington. It is a journal historically valuable, sometimes deeply moving, sometimes amusing, but always holding the attention.

Among biographies, *Sir John Simon* (1963) by R. Lambert, is a fine sympathetic and full length biography of this great man, surgeon, first medical officer of health for London, and great medical administrator; *Doctors Monro: a medical saga* (1964) by R. E. Wright-St. Clair, is a first rate account of the three Alexander Monros, bringing the family saga up to the present time; *Oliver St. John Gogarty* (1964) by U. O'Connor, is a delightfully told story of the Dublin ear, nose and throat surgeon, poet, writer, scholar, athlete, politician, and conversationalist; *James Douglas of the Pouch* (1964) by K. Bryn Thomas records that Douglas wrote the first textbook of midwifery in Scotland and the first manual of practical anatomy to appear in English, as well as being the great friend of William Hunter; *Huggins of Rhodesia: The man and his country* (1964) by L. H. Gan and M. Gelfand, is a solid piece of biography about Godfrey Huggins, later Lord Malvern, surgeon turned politician; *Take my hands: the remarkable story of Dr. Mary Verghese* (1963) by D. C. Wilson is the story of one of Dr. Ida Scudder's Indian students who became head of a department of physical medicine and rehabilitation at the Christian Medical College at Vellore, Dr. Verghese herself being a paraplegic; *Dr. Ida: the story of Dr. Ida Scudder of Vellore* (1964) also by D. C. Wilson tells us that Dr. Scudder was the granddaughter of the first medical missionary to India from the United States, and how she established a medical and nursing school for women in southern India; two biographies with much of medical interest are: *Louis XIV* (1964) by V. Cronin, and *Rasputin and the fall of the Romanovs* (1964) by C. Wilson.

The only general history of medicine noted during the year is the *Story of the progress of medicine* (1964) by C. F. V. Smout, a disappointing attempt at a popular history of medicine.

Lord Brain's second volume of collected essays, *Doctors past and present* (1964) is a charming, eminently readable book, but one is left gasping at the quiet, unassuming yet wide erudition of the author; *The Black Hole and other essays* (1964) by Macdonald Critchley, another distinguished neurologist, is a collection of his writings comprising case histories of celebrated figures, biographical sketches

and other essays on no less interesting subjects. Five other volumes which have been handled but not perused are the *Works of Sir Thomas Browne* (1964) in four volumes edited by Sir Geoffrey Keynes, and the *Religio Medici and other works by Sir Thomas Browne* (1964) edited by L. C. Martin. How Osler would have loved not only to have possessed these books but to have read them, as he must surely have done.

Among special histories may be noted the following: *History of the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London, 1617-1815* (1963) volume 1, by the late Cecil Wall, edited by E. Ashworth Underwood, is a scholarly work ably edited; *A short history of the gout and the rheumatic diseases* (1964) by W. S. C. Copeman is the published series of lectures delivered by the author at the University of California, and is an erudite presentation of the subject; *The fight against leprosy* (1964) by P. Feeney, is a well written account deserving attention; *The royal malady* (1964) by C. C. Trench is a graphic account of the mental illness of George III; *Contraception through the ages* (1963) by B. E. Finch and H. Green ranges widely though not very deeply into this subject which is so much in the public mind at present; *Curare—its history and usage* (1964) by K. Byrn Thomas is a fascinating account well documented; *Description of the Retreat (York), by Samuel Tuke, 1813* (1964) is a reprint with an introduction by R. Hunter and Ida Macalpine of an important landmark in the history of British psychiatry; *A short history of British psychology* (1964) by L. S. Hearnshaw is an easy presentation of the subject; *The advancement of child health* (1964) by A. V. Neale, are the Heath Clark Lectures, 1961, and constitute one of the major contributions to the story of the development of this important subject; *The evolution of hospitals in Britain* (1964) edited by F. N. L. Poynter comprises the fifteen papers delivered at the third British Congress of the History of Medicine and Pharmacy held in 1962, and all the papers are of sterling quality; of hospitals from the social and administrative points of view is *The hospitals, 1800-1948* (1964) by B. Abel-Smith, a valuable work rather spoiled by the obtrusion of political opinions; *St. Mary's Hospitals, Manchester, 1790-1963* (1964) by J. H. Young presents an admirable picture of an institution of which Charles White was a moving spirit in its foundation; *Pharmacy in history* (1964) by G. E. Trease is another well documented account of an important subject; *The sanitary condition of the labouring population of Great Britain by Edwin Chadwick 1842* (1964) edited by M. W. Flinn, is a timely reprint by Edinburgh University Press of one of the classics in British public health with a first rate introduction by the editor. Although not a historical work, a useful guide to the present health services in Britain is *Health services in Britain* (1964), 3rd edition, a Central Office of Information pamphlet, No. 20.

Two books dealing with witchcraft may be of interest. The first is a reprint of Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of witchcraft, 1584* (1964) edited by H. R. Williamson who also contributes an introduction; the other is *Witch doctor: traditional medicine man of Rhodesia* (1964) by M. Gelfand, is a sympathetic and graphic account of medicine as practiced by the nganga or traditional medicine man of Rhodesia.

We have received from Messrs. Oliver and Boyd a copy of *Germs and Ideas* (1965), an English translation of *Itinéraires de Contagions* by the late André Siegfried, for many years professor of economics in Paris. The author was also a geographer and when invited in 1958 to deliver the introductory lecture to the class of systematic medicine at the opening of the university session he chose as his subject the routes of spread followed by epidemic diseases. This lecture in an expanded form was later published under the title mentioned above. The present translation is by Jean Henderson and Mercedes Claraso. In this work Siegfried discusses the factors affecting the diffusion of infectious disease; in a historical review of pandemics he presents four of the dramatic characters—cholera, plague, influenza and yellow fever; and in his conclusions he stresses the close resemblance in epidemic behaviour

between the human infections and man's ideas, beliefs and religions. The original lecture was intended for medical students "who often have the habit of viewing the intellectual world through the prism of medical science" and it is that group of readers that this short study of biology and ideas may most profitably be recommended.

*The Otago Medical School under the first three Deans* (1964) by Sir C. Harcus and Sir G. Bell is a volume full of interest especially for Scottish medical historians, and is the only medical historical work noticed from Australasia during the current year.

Dr. F. J. Spencer of the Medical College of Virginia, Richmond, U.S.A. has contributed several papers on paperbacks in medical education, and the rise of such books is one of the striking features of modern times. From the United States we have obtained one or two volumes which are worth possessing at a moderate price. *The story of alchemy and early chemistry* (1960) by J. M. Stillman; *The story of X-rays from Rontgen to isotopes* (1960) by A. R. Bleich; *Antony van Leeuwenhoek and his 'little animals'* (1960) by Clifford Dobell are all excellent Dover publications, while *The history of surgical anaesthesia* (1963) by T. E. Keys is another Dover paperback of a book published in 1945 and now not only reprinted but also revised and enlarged by the author.

Professor Adam Patrick and Dr. W. S. Mitchell have drawn our attention to individual items which may be of interest to members. These are a long article on Robert Louis Stevenson in the days when he lived at Bournemouth, and giving many details of medical interest (*Listener*, 22nd April, 1965); The medical activities of the late Reverend T. H. E. C. Espin, vicar of Tow Law, against the background of contemporary medicine, by F. L. Kronenberger (*Newcastle med. J.* 1964, 28, 174); The keelmen's hospital by A. E. Bremner (*Newcastle med. J.* 1964, 28, 183); A history of water purification in the British Army by W. R. D. Egginton (*J. of R.A.M.C.*, 1965, 111, 34), and Miss Nightingale and the College by R. E. Barnsley (*Ibid*, 67); The missing link (*Penrose Annual*, 58, 237) is a potted history of anatomical illustration: Translations of medical classics, a list, by Joan S. Emmerson (1965) being publication No. 3 of the University Library, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

We should like to extend our warm thanks to various individuals and scientific bodies who have sent us catalogues, journals, papers and reports during the past session. To the Harveian Librarian, Royal College of Physicians of London, a series of publications dealing with exhibitions held within the College; The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry for its Annual Report, 1964-65; The Editor, *Catalyst*; Industrial Journal of Shell Chemical Company, for copies of *Catalyst*; Dr. Genevieve Miller, editor, *Bulletin of Cleveland Medical Library*, U.S.A. for copies of the *Bulletin* and of *Bibliography of the History of Medicine of the United States and Canada*, 1963; Drs. Wolfram Kock and Egill Snorrason for *Medicinhistorisk Arsbok*, 1964; Professor A. Pazzini for *Pagine di Storia della Medicina*; Professor Ivolino de Vasconcellos for *Revista Brasileira de Historia da Medicina*; Dr. Hakim Mohammad Said for *Hamdard Medical Digest*; Ministry of Health, Cuba, for *Cuadernos de Historia de la Salud Publica*; The Directors of the Committee on History of Science and Technology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and of the Library of Medical History of Hungary for copies of their *Proceedings*. All these publications are accommodated in the Library of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh for safe keeping.

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### The Forty-Ninth Meeting and Sixteenth Annual General Meeting

The Forty-Ninth Meeting and Sixteenth Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on Wednesday, 11th November, 1964, in the New Library of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. In the absence of the two Vice-Presidents,

Dr. Douglas Guthrie, Honorary President, occupied the chair. The Society's Annual Report of Proceedings for 1963-64 was presented and formally adopted, comment being made on the revised format of the title cover. The Honorary Treasurer gave a brief outline of the financial state of the Society which was satisfactory. On the motion of Dr. Guthrie it was unanimously agreed that Mrs. Goodall, widow of Mr. Archibald Lamont Goodall, be admitted a member of the Society without subscription, as a token of the Society's indebtedness to her husband. On the motion of Dr. W. N. Boog Watson, seconded by Dr. W. S. Mitchell, Dr. W. A. Alexander was proposed as President, with Professors Adam Patrick and Norman M. Dott as Vice-Presidents, together with the Honorary Secretary and Messrs. Thomas Gibson and Phillip Harris, members of Council along with those members of Council eligible for re-election. These proposals were unanimously accepted and amid acclamation Dr. Alexander assumed the chair. In thanking the Society for the honour done him, he intimated that for the meantime he would continue to act as Honorary Treasurer, and paid tribute to the retiring members of Council, Drs. E. H. Duff, Ian A. Porter and A. T. Sandison for their support of the Society. Dr. Lewis F. Howitt was proposed as Assistant Honorary Secretary and this was unanimously agreed to. Dr. Alexander then called upon Dr. Howitt to read a paper before the Society entitled

### SOME MEDICAL HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF SMOKE

Smoking to us means tobacco smoke, but it was not always tobacco smoke that was inhaled. One of the earliest discoveries by primitive man was fire. Whether this was the result of the sun's rays igniting dry grass or leaves or whether it was the result of an accidental spark from one stone hitting another and setting fire to some combustible material no one will ever know, but fire quickly became an important part of primitive life. It was necessary for warmth, cooking, keeping wild animals at bay, and for metal work. Because of its important part in early man's life it quickly became a religious symbol. The priests who worked with fire no doubt found the smoke and the fumes irritating to their eyes and possibly in order to remove the irritant effect of the fumes, they threw herbs and gums into the flames. The use of these herbs to give a sweet smelling smoke spread through the ancient world and the Greeks and Romans were aware of the value of smoke not only for religious ceremonies but also for its medicinal properties.

Hippocrates recommended smoke, by inhalation for certain women's disorders and Pliny recommended the inhalation of coltsfoot for curing an obstinate cough, the smoke being drawn through a hollow reed. The Greeks were aware of tribes who inhaled narcotic plants for pleasure and Herodotus describes the custom of a tribe inhabiting the part of Europe known to-day as Bulgaria. This tribe scattered hemp seed on red hot stones and inhaled the fumes. Plutarch also describes this tribe's habit and mentions that those members who inhaled the smoke gradually passed into a drugged sleep.

Tobacco is a sub-tropical plant and consequently was unknown in early Europe. In Central America, the priests became aware of the properties of tobacco in religious ceremonies. With the blowing on the embers and inhalation of the tobacco fumes a state of intoxication resulted. Whether this was due to hyperventilation or the narcotic effect of the leaf is not important, but the resultant trance impressed the worshippers, particularly when some divine prophecy was made as the priest regained normality. Tobacco, however, ceased to be used solely by the priest caste and its use spread throughout all sections of the community. Men began rolling leaves to form a tube into which powdered tobacco leaf was inserted. The rolled tube was called tobacco by the natives and tobacco, the word as we know it to-day, is derived from this.

In 1492 Columbus landed on San Salvador and then went on to explore what is now the Greater and Lesser Antilles. He moved on to Cuba when the exploration

was carried out by Rodrigo de Jerez and Luis de Torres, two of his crew. These two saw natives smoking and were greatly intrigued with the habit. It is believed that Rodrigo de Jerez was the first European to have adopted the habit. He was certainly imprisoned on his return home for being found in the street belching smoke from his mouth and nose, but when he was released after a few years he found several of his countrymen had adopted the habit and were going about unpunished.

The tobacco plant was introduced into France by André Thévet in 1555. Thévet was a monk who accompanied the Knights of Malta on an expedition to Brazil. However, it is Nicot who is given the credit for introducing tobacco into France. Jean Nicot was French Ambassador to the King of Portugal from 1559-1561. Lisbon at this time was the centre of trade for the Old World and Nicot took every opportunity to notify his countrymen of anything new that came into Lisbon. The dye indigo was one of these novelties passed on to his own country. While visiting the Lisbon prisons a keeper presented him with a new herb—tobacco—which had been given to him by a sailor. Nicot had heard tales of wounds and sores which had been considered as incurable, but which had healed following the application of the tobacco leaf, and he decided to send the plant home to France to be used for the treatment of chronic skin conditions. Some of these plants were given to Catherine de Medici and for a time the plant was known in France as the *Herbe Médicée*. This name possibly gave rise to the story that Catherine invented snuff and that the plant was used to cure the migraine which troubled both her sons Francis II and Charles IX. Francis was always very delicate and frail and was rarely not receiving some form of treatment or other. His physician decided to try an ointment prepared with tobacco but unfortunately Francis died with symptoms of poisoning and it was believed tobacco ointment was the cause.

As this was the age of alchemists and magicians the tobacco plant became endowed with magical properties as far as the number of diseases it could cure. Nicolo Monardes, a Spanish physician, recorded the experiences of sailors who saw the curative effects of tobacco on the natives of the new world. However, although the natives were known to smoke the leaf through a tube, the healing benefits of the leaf were the result of applications of the leaf or lotions prepared from the leaf.

During the first half of the seventeenth century the smoking habit spread through Europe largely due to the Thirty Years War which began in 1618. Smoking was already common among the Spanish and Dutch armies and the English mercenaries, and they introduced the habit into Germany. When the Swedes entered the war in 1630 their soldiers fell prey to the habit as did the armies of Bohemia and Hungary.

Early in the seventeenth century when an outbreak of plague occurred in London, smoking became popular as the result of statements made by the doctors of that day. They observed that the people who smoked were less likely to become victims than non-smokers. A Dutch physician, Van Diemberbroeck, described this property of tobacco as a result of his study of the plague which struck Holland in 1636. "Many wonder how tobacco can be an internal antidote when it is drawn in through the nose and immediately expelled. But its action on the lungs purifies the blood, and by its contact with the mouth its benefits are communicated to all parts of the the body through the digestive tract. From the evidence at hand, therefore, it is clear that smoking tobacco is of great value in preventing the contagion of the plague."

When the Great Plague struck London in 1665 tobacco was used extensively as a disinfectant. Boys attending Eton had to smoke a pipeful of tobacco before entering their classrooms and one pupil described how he had been thrashed for not smoking. Those members of the public employed in removing the dead and tending the sick either smoked incessantly or chewed the plant. Pepys describes in his diary "I did in Drury Lane see two or three houses marked with a red cross upon the doors. It put me into an ill conception of myself and my smell so that I was forced to buy some roll-tobacco to smell to and chew which took away the

apprehension.” William Kemp in his “Brief Treatise of the Nature, Causes, Signs, Preservations from and Cure of the Pestilence” written in 1665 also described the disinfectant property of tobacco.

Cornelius Bontekoe, a well known Dutch physician of the seventeenth century felt that tobacco smoke was essential for health and in his opinion the three discoveries of his time were the discovery of the circulation of the blood, the circumnavigation of the world, and the introduction of tobacco to Europe.

Towards the end of the past century this disinfectant property of tobacco smoke still had its supporters. The guardian of a Bolton workhouse issued tobacco free of charge to the inmates in order that the fumes would disinfect the wards and in this country at the beginning of this century a medical officer connected with a Greenwich workhouse reported that smoking conferred an immunity on the smoker from infection.

However, the harmful effects of tobacco are better known than the benefits largely as a result of the many papers published during the past decade. Probably the first tattack on tobacco was in a document “The Opinion of Sundry Learned Physicians” published in 1598 in this country. This was followed in 1604 by the well known “Counterblaste to Tobacco” written by James I. James’s mind had been poisoned against Raleigh by various courtiers including Henry Howard and Robert Cecil so it may be that James’s attack on smoking was directed not mainly against the tobacco but against the man who introduced it to this country. James writes that “Tobacco being a common herb, which (though under divers names) grows almost everywhere, was first found out by some of the barbarous Indians, to be a Preservative, an Antidote against the Pox, a filthy disease, whereunto these barbarous people are (as all men know) very much subject, what through the uncleanly and adjust Constitution of Their bodies, and what through the intemperate heat of their Climate: so that as from them was first brought into Christendom that most detestable disease, so from them likewise was first brought this use of Tobacco, as a stinking and unsavoury Antidote, for so corrupted and execrable a Malady, the stinking Suffumigation whereof they yet use against that disease, making so one canker or venom to eat out another.” Having dealt with the introduction of tobacco James proceeded to deal with its claims as a medicine by ridiculing its claims. “It cures the Gout in the feet, and (which is miraculous) in that very instant when the smoke thereof as light, flies up into the head, the victim thereof, as heavy, runs down to the little toe. It helps all sorts of Agues. It makes a man sober that was drunk. It refreshes a weary man, and yet makes a man hungry. Being taken when they go to bed it makes one sleep soundly, and yet being taken when a man is sleepy and drowsy it will, as they say, awake his brain, and quicken his understanding. As for Curing of the Pox, it serves for that use but amongst the Poxey Indian slaves. Here in England it is refined and will not deign to cure here any other than cleanly and gentlemanly diseases.” The counterblast ends :

“A custom troublesome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, dangerous to the lungs, and in the black stinking fumes thereof, nearest resembling the horrible Stygian smoke of the pit that is bottomless”.

The following year James visited Oxford and during his visit a debate was held to decide whether “the frequent smoking of exotic tobacco is salutary for the health”. Several physicians disputed the King’s view, but apparently did not incur his wrath, one speaker being bold enough to speak with a lit pipe in his hand.

Starting about this period many attempts, or anti-smoking campaigns as we know them, were made to discourage smoking. Looking at them now it is no surprise that our present day attempts to discourage smoking have been so unsuccessful. In 1603 Sultan Ahmed I made it known throughout his Empire that smoking was contrary to the teachings of the Koran. Any unfortunate found smoking had his pipe stem thrust through his nose and thereafter paraded through

the streets on a donkey. This may seem drastic but Ahmed was succeeded by his son Muhrad who was even more maladjusted. On 7th August 1633, after the birth of six daughters, a son was born to Muhrad and Constantinople went gay, celebrating the event with illuminations. Unfortunately, through carelessness, fire broke out and destroyed half the city. Muhrad detested smoking and the disaster was blamed on smoking and he determined to stamp out the habit. His campaign drove the smokers off the streets into the coffee houses where they smoked for a time in comparative safety. Unfortunately Muhrad had the unpleasant habit of mingling with his subjects in disguise, and if while visiting a coffee house any criticism of his campaign was heard the coffee house was destroyed by his soldiers. Anyone seen by him smoking was marked and the following morning the body of the smoker would be found outside the building where he had been seen smoking.

The first Czar of Russia, Michael Feodorovitch Romanoff, also discouraged smoking, anyone found smoking was dissuaded from continuing by having his nostrils slit and being given a course of the knout. This was a three thonged whip made of untanned elk skin. Snuff takers got off somewhat lighter in that they merely had their noses torn off.

Prohibition was also imposed by European Governments. For example in Switzerland smoking was prohibited and a special Court was set up to deal with cases, and this Court sat for about one hundred years before being dissolved. In France tobacco could only be purchased on a doctor's prescription until this law was revoked by Louis XIV.

Despite all the legislation and punishments smoking continued to spread throughout the world. If drastic punishment did not act as a deterrent is it little wonder that reasoning has had so little effect to-day? This, I think, was seen most strikingly following the Report of the Royal College of Physicians in 1962. A survey was taken of members of Edinburgh University Staff to assess how their smoking habits had altered as a result of this Report. There was little or no change and this was among the more enlightened members of the community, so is it any wonder this reasoning approach has failed with the public as a whole?

However, following the failure to prevent smoking by legislation and punishment, attacks on smoking were then taken up by individuals. Their approach was usually the one that tobacco was a poison. In the first half of the nineteenth Century a pamphlet was drawn up by Joel Shew in America in which he listed 87 diseases and disabilities resulting from the consumption of tobacco. Around the same time a Dutch poet describes a smoker with his sunken jaws and eyes while another Dutchman wrote about a person called Clever Kit. Apparently a schoolboy who was Kit, intellectual inferior at school, graduated in medicine whereas Kit, as a result of smoking, failed to rise above the grade of petty clerk. In the middle of the nineteenth century a booklet was published in America directed specially at boys. It had the rather cumbersome title of "Thoughts and Stories for American Lads or Uncle Toby's Antitobacco Advice to his Nephew Billy Bruce."

With cigarettes replacing the pipe as the most popular method of smoking, attacks were directed towards the cigarette. An Anti-Cigarette League was set up in America at the beginning of this century. These campaigns, carried out by individuals or by groups of individuals, were not altogether unsuccessful—succeeding in a few American States in imposing a ban on the sale of tobacco. The strangest effect of these campaigners was possibly the one achieved by a Miss Gaston in Kansas where she succeeded in having the words "and he called for his pipe" deleted from the well known nursery rhyme.

Looking back on these attacks by individuals we might think them rather eccentric, but perhaps the present day defenders of tobacco could be considered equally eccentric. Following one of Doll and Hill's papers, one writer to the *British Medical Journal* tried to disprove the mass of statistical evidence by putting forward



as evidence the fact that Heinrich Herz of Silesia lived to the age of 142 despite being a pipe smoker.

Relationships between cancer and disease based on scientific observations have appeared over the past forty years and tobacco smoking has been shown to affect every system of the human body, and the findings of these modern authors could perhaps be said to lend support to the outburst by King James I, 300 years ago.

This paper has dealt with tobacco smoking, but as mentioned earlier, tobacco was probably one of the herbs used to remove the irritant effect of smoke from fires used in religious ceremonies. This irritant effect of smoke is well known to-day—reaching its most dangerous level in the great smog which covered part of this country, and in particular London, for a period of four days in December 1952. During that week the mortality statistics showed an excess of 4,000 deaths over the expected number for that period. This abnormal fog caused widespread alarm, and as a result, a Committee was formed under Sir Hugh Beaver to examine the causes of air pollution and what preventive measures could be applied. The findings of this Committee led to the Clean Air Act which, among other things, required local authorities to enforce provisions relating to smoke control areas.

Pollution, its hazards and possible preventive measures, however, had been considered some three centuries before the Clean Air Act of 1956. With the expansion of London as a centre of trade and commerce and the increasing use of coal, the air over London became more and more contaminated. In 1661, John Evelyn, a writer who dealt with a wide variety of subjects including history, religion, forestry, architecture, law and navigation, published his observations on this hazard of pollution under the title of "Fumifugium" or the "Inconvenience of the Aer and Smoake of London Disiaped". Evelyn asks "Is there under Heaven such Coughing and Snuffing to be heard, as in London Churches and Assemblies of People, where the Barking and the Spitting is uncessant and most importunate?" The source of the atmospheric pollution, according to Evelyn, was certain trades which, being sited near one another, contaminated the air. These trades which were blamed were the Brewers, the Dyers, the Lime Burners, and the Salt and Soap Boilers. Evelyn's recommendation that these trades be removed to a site five or six miles distant from London was not acted upon, but he could be said to be the originator of the present day industrial site.

However this paper is concerned primarily with the various aspects of tobacco smoking and it can be rounded off by the mention of an article which appeared in "Punch". This article would appear to sum up the properties of tobacco and also demonstrate how far a smoker will go to convince himself and others that smoking is essential for life. It puts together reasons given by smokers to their doctors as to why they still smoke. "Me nerves, doctor; sort of helps me to think; can't digest nothing otherwise; keeps down the weight; keeps up the weight; everyone else does it; habit I suppose; keeps the moth out of the carpet."

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Following Dr. Howitt's paper a discussion ensued that only the exigencies of time brought to a close so great was the interest shown in the subject.

## The Fiftieth Ordinary Meeting

The Fiftieth Ordinary Meeting of the Society was held on Wednesday, 24th March, 1965, in the Hall of the Royal Medical Society, 7 Melbourne Place, Edinburgh, Dr. W. A. Alexander, President, in the chair. In his opening remarks the President referred to the important place of the Royal Medical Society in the medical history of the city and recalled that the Hall was opened in 1852. Owing to the entire block of buildings, of which the Royal Medical Society's premises occupied a part, having been taken over for redevelopment purposes, our Society's meeting would be the last we could have in that Hall.

Dr. S. Selwyn read a paper entitled:

### **SIR JOHN PRINGLE (1707-1782): HOSPITAL REFORMER; MORAL PHILOSOPHER; AND PIONEER OF ANTISEPTICS**

(The following is an abstract of the paper which is to be published in full in *Medical History*)

The medical bacteriologist who examines the work of Sir John Pringle soon becomes aware of the remarkable and fundamental contributions made to his subject by one who is now almost entirely forgotten. Specialists in various branches of Medicine, the Arts and Sciences who would consider this many-sided genius must experience a similar feeling of gratitude mingled with sadness.

Sir John Pringle was a member of a distinguished Border family whose home was at Stichill, near Kelso. The house itself passed out of the possession of the family in the early nineteenth century, and was later demolished, to be replaced by a pretentious 'Scottish-baronial' structure. No traces now remain of the later house or of the fine estate.

Pringle's early education was under a private tutor, but at the age of 15 he entered the Faculty of Arts at the University of St. Andrews. In 1727 he graduated A.M. and proceeded to the newly-established Medical Faculty of the University of Edinburgh where, however, he stayed for one year only. In common with so many of the great physicians of the period, his main medical training was obtained under the guidance of Boerhaave at Leyden.

While on his way back to Scotland, Pringle studied for a time in Paris; but within a year of obtaining his M.D. degree he had established himself in medical practice in Edinburgh. The first evidence of Pringle's uncommon abilities was his appointment in 1734, at the age of 26, to the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University.

Pringle was an unconventional moral philosopher, and his work was viewed with varying degrees of enthusiasm by his contemporaries. Certainly this phase of Pringle's career should repay close examination by a specialist. For eight years Pringle conscientiously performed the combined duties of physician and moral philosopher, and for a further three years he retained his University Chair. During this latter period, however, he was full-time physician in the British Army abroad, and received a salary of twenty shillings per day for his services.

He soon rose to become Physician-General of the Army, and his military period—which extended from 1742 to 1748 with occasional attendances up to the year 1758—proved to be one of the most important in his entire career.

In 1750, after settling in London, Pringle published the first account of his work as physician to the army. In his 'Observations on the Hospital or Jayl Fevers' written in the form of a letter to Richard Mead, Pringle pointed out that the two diseases were the same—typhus—and he offered valuable advice on the means of

preventing further spread of the London outbreak of jail fever. As a result of his observations amongst the troops after the Battle of Culloden (Pringle being chief physician to the unpopular Hanoverian side) he recommended, in particular, detailed measures for the destruction of those ectoparasites which we now know to be the vectors of the infection.

In the year that saw the publication of his work on hospital and jail fever, Pringle began to communicate to the Royal Society the results of his 'Experiments upon Septic and Anti-septic Substances'. This work extended over a period of several years, and its merits were acknowledged by the Royal Society with the award of the Copely Gold Medal. In his experiments, Pringle studied the effects of various chemicals on the processes of putrefaction. Using quantitative procedures he carefully evaluated those substance that act as antiseptics—a term which he was the first to use. With remarkable insight Pringle recognised the relationship between putrefaction and fermentation, describing their beneficial role in the economy of nature as well as the part they play in the production of 'contagious' diseases. The full validity of his speculations concerning the use of systematic antiseptics in the treatment of disease has only recently been appreciated.

Although the direct influence of his work on antiseptics can be traced into the nineteenth century, it is surprising to find that modern workers in this field, from the time of Lister onwards, have been quite unaware of Pringle's extraordinary contribution.

The 'Experiments upon Septic and Antiseptic Substances' were republished in 1752 as an appendix to Pringle's celebrated 'Observation son the Diseases of the Army'. This work, which is recognised to be the foundation of modern military medicine, described in detail the epidemiology, pathogenesis and prevention of diseases encountered amongst soldiers. Of particular interest are the observations on the spread of infection in Military hospitals.

The most prevalent forms of cross-infection in these hospitals were typhus, dysentery and scabies, and Pringle deals fully with each of these diseases. Following his thorough eidemological investigations, Pringle was able to offer sound advice on the prevention of cross-infection. His directions for improvements in hospital ventilation and hygiene, and for the avoidance of overcrowding were revolutionary at the time; and they remain entirely valid and relevant after more than two centuries.

In later editions of his book, Pringle introduces the concept of animate contagion. He was dissatisfied with attempts to explain the spread of infection on the basis of 'miasma' and 'epidemical constitution of the atmosphere'—doctrines that were to persist for another 150 years—and he was quick to appreciate the possible medical importance of Leeuwenhoek's 'animalcula.' Those irrational doctrines, which had received the authority of Thomas Sydenham and Richard Mead, were to suffer a further telling blow in a late paper on influenza written by Pringle in 1775. This work was published posthumously in 1784 and was vehemently discussed right into the early nineteenth century.

Perhaps the most extraordinary of his works has only recently been firmly attributed to Pringle: it is the first 'Life of General Wolfe,' written within a year of Wolfe's death. The panegyric style is quite unlike anything else found in Pringle's writings, and the work remains mysterious and chimerical.

His other more orthodox works are all of great interest, and show a masterly command of very diverse fields. His miscellaneous writings indeed cover a most astonishing range of medical, scientific and arts subjects. Many of these papers are included in the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society.

Pringle's invaluable services to the Royal Society were recognised in 1772, when he was elected President. By this stage in his career he had received many honours including a Baronetcy and appointment as Royal Physician. The 'Discourses' with which he introduced each year's Copley Gold Medallist remain as monuments to Pringle's period as President of the Royal Society. Each discourse contains a scholarly review of the medallist's field of enquiry—subjects ranging from astronomy and chemistry to electricity and naval medicine.

In 1778, at the age of 71, Pringle resigned from the Presidency of the Royal Society. Many believed at the time that his resignation was largely the result of a dispute in the Royal Society that may now appear to be quite ludicrous. Both within the Society and beyond its walls the relative merits of blunt and pointed lightning conductors were fiercely debated.

The dispute was not, in fact, as trivial as it now seems, for there had been a number of calamitous examples of damage from lightning at about that time, and, by misapplying the recommendations of Pringle's friend, Benjamin Franklin, many dangerous lightning conductors had been installed without a proper earth lead. The Council of the Royal Society had decided in favour of the pointed type of conductor, but the King strongly supported the opposing side. Weld, in his 'History of the Royal Society,' relates that the King even tried to persuade Pringle to reverse the decision of the Royal Society. Pringle retorted, 'Sire, I cannot reverse the laws and operations of nature' to which the King replied, 'Perhaps, Sir John, you had better retire'.

Two years after his resignation, Pringle returned to Edinburgh intending to pass his remaining years here. Unfortunately the climate no longer suited him and his former circle of friends had sadly dwindled. He therefore returned to London, after first gifting to the Royal College of Physicians a valuable collection of his manuscripts. These contain a detailed account of Pringle's medical work in London; and the ten folio volumes, together with other accompanying manuscripts, constitute a complete system of mid-eighteenth century medicine. It is very regrettable that no method has yet been found to circumvent the extraordinary conditions on which these manuscripts were gifted—'That they are never to be lent out on any Pretence Whatsoever. That they are never to be Published'.

Pringle survived his return to London by only a few months. His memory was revered throughout the world's medical, scientific and artistic circles for half a century after his death: but following the passage of years, and the disappearance of his birth-place—and, more recently, the destruction of his grave—there now remain few memorials to Pringle. An exploration of his work and the events of his life will, however, reveal a truly noble monument to one of Britain's greatest physicians and philosophers.

A lively discussion followed Dr. Selwyn's original and thoughtful paper. Following the meeting several members took the opportunity of having a last look over the Royal Medical Society's premises and examining some of its relics and records.

W. A. ALEXANDER, *President.*

H. P. TAIT, *Honorary Secretary.*

## The Scottish Society of the History of Medicine.

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### CONSTITUTION.

1. The Society shall be called "THE SCOTTISH SOCIETY OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE," and shall consist of those who desire to promote the study of the History of Medicine.
2. A General Meeting of Members shall be held once a year to receive a report and to elect Office-Bearers.
3. The management of the affairs of the Society shall be vested in the Office-Bearers, who shall include a President, one or more Vice-Presidents, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and not more than ten other Members to form a Council. The Council shall have power to co-opt other Members who, in their opinion, are fitted to render special service to the Society.
4. All Office-Bearers shall be elected annually. The President shall not hold office for more than three successive years, but shall be eligible to serve again after one year. Not more than eight Members of Council, or two-thirds of the total number, shall be eligible for immediate re-election.
5. The Annual Subscription shall be fixed from time to time by the Council and reported to members of the Society.
6. The Secretary shall keep brief Minutes of the proceedings shall prepare Agenda, and shall conduct the correspondence of the Society.
7. Meetings shall be held at least twice yearly, and the place of meeting shall be in any of the four University centres, or elsewhere, as the Council may decide.
8. This Constitution may be amended at any General Meeting of the Society on twenty-one days' notice of the proposed amendment being given by the Secretary, such amendment to be included in the Agenda circulated for the Meeting.

The Scottish Society  
of the  
History of Medicine

(Founded April, 1948)

*Report of Proceedings*

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