

Society Reports

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY HISTORY OF MEDICINE SOCIETY

At a meeting of the Society held on 17 November 1959, with the President, Professor H. A. Harris, in the Chair, Mr. John Gilmour, M.A., Director of the University Botanic Garden, Cambridge, delivered a lecture on 'Herbals'. Mr. Gilmour first gave a brief sketch of the earliest published herbals, which were mainly commentaries on the works of Theophrastus and Dioscorides. The botany of 1500 combined the philosophical approach of Aristotle with the descriptive and medical botany of Dioscorides and Pliny. The *Grete Herball* printed by Peter Treveris in 1526 is full of mythology and superstition and the illustrations are stylized and unnatural.

The publication of Otto Brunfels's *Herbarum vivae eicones* in 1530 began a new era in the history of the herbal and of botany. Brunfels, Hieronymus Bock and Leonhard Fuchs were all doctors and all embraced the reformed faith. Bock, who is also known as Tragus, first gave descriptions from nature and the illustrations of Fuchs's *De Historia Stirpium* (1542) remain unsurpassed.

The speaker gave shorter accounts of the work of Valerius Cordus, Camerarius, who first drew the internal structure of flowers, Dodoens, L'Obel and Clusius. In conclusion he spoke of the British herbalists, William Turner, the father of British botany and Henry Lyle, the first amateur botanist; John Gerard, shameless plagiarist, John Parkinson and Thomas Johnson. The value of Mr. Gilmour's impressive survey of an important aspect of the history of botany and of medicine was enhanced by the priceless copies of many of the works he mentioned which he was able to allow the audience to examine. They form part of the collection of the University Department of Botany.

At a meeting of the Society held on 2 February 1960, Dr. Richard Hunter spoke on 'The History of Psychiatry in England, sixteenth–nineteenth centuries.' The lecture was illustrated by slides of the title pages of many of the most important books in the history of psychiatry in England, the majority from copies in the speaker's own collection.

At a meeting of the Society held on 16 February 1960, Mr. Peter Green gave a lecture on 'Thomas Browne'. Mr. Green, well known as novelist, biographer and literary critic, gave a brilliant account of the literary and medical influences which shaped the style and determined the content of Browne's work, and of Browne's influence on his successors.

The Annual General Meeting of the Society was held 10 May 1960.

The Secretary's and Treasurer's reports were received.

The Society has had a successful year and there has been a small increase in membership. Undergraduate membership and attendance remain regrettably small. Enquiries suggest that this is largely the result of the counter-attraction of the numerous other societies in the University, and the heavy pressure of work. During the coming year joint meetings will be held with certain College medical societies.

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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