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LECTURE.

MEDICINE AND MAGIC.

By HERBERT PATERSON, Esq., C.B.E., M.C., M.D., F.R.C.S.

A large and appreciative audience listened to Mr. Paterson's lecture on "Medicine and Magic," which embodied a great deal of nursing history in several of its aspects. In commencing, Mr. Paterson said that it was remarkable to observe to what an extent, through the centuries, medicine and magic had gone hand in hand. In its original sense, magic signified the doctrine or teaching of Magi and comprised all things associated with religion and science. Later, laymen assumed the title of magi and eventually the term magic became synonymous with necromancy, sorcery and suchlike.

The earliest idea of disease appears to have been that it was due to the presence of an evil spirit or demon, which had taken up its abode in the body of the sufferer. Among primitive races, treatment consisted of the recital of incantations and the administration of nauseous and objectionable substances, in the belief that what was bad for the demon was good for the patient. Egypt may be said to have been the birthplace of the art of medicine, and in no other country is there such a record of continuous progress. The Egyptians were the first people to stop decayed teeth with gold. They had an extensive list of drugs, including soda, hyoscyamus, gentian, opium, castor oil, and many others. They used the actual cautery, massage, plasters, emetics, soothing syrups, hair dyes, and cosmetics. It is said that the upper classes of the Egyptians took a purgative once a week, and had their stomachs washed out once a month. The attitude of the ancient Egyptians towards medicine was theistic. Life was regarded as a gift of the gods. While recognising the existence of evil spirits they taught that primarily disease was the result of neglect or the displeasure of the gods. Naturally, therefore, the priests, the mortal representatives of the immortal gods, were the persons most qualified to treat the sick. Medical treatment consisted mainly of invocations of the gods with incantations and the use of charms. It is recorded that about the year 3500 B.C. there dwelt in Egypt a physician named I-em-hotep (the name means "he comes in peace"), who was probably a priest of Ra the Sun god. He was certainly versatile, for he was renowned as a priest, a physician, a minister of the crown, a writer, an alchemist, an astrologer, and a magician. His temple was at Memphis, and this must have been the first out-patient department of which we have any record. The Egyptian priests were keen students of all things pertaining to magic and astrology, and the prestige and influence thus gained for them suggested to laymen the possibility of using such powers, not for the good of others, but for personal gain. Thus there developed in Egypt two kinds of magic (*a*) lawful magic as practised by the priests to benefit the living and the dead; and (*b*) unlawful magic, employed to forward evil schemes.

Greek and Roman writers referred to the Egyptians as expert in the occult sciences and possessed of powers that could do good or harm. Mr. Paterson related several ancient

legends from the papyrus bearing on their practices. We read in the Bible of the power of the Egyptian magicians, and that "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." The Egyptian magicians were reputed to have great skill in what is spoken of as sympathetic magic. We are all acquainted with its use even down to comparatively recent times, as, for instance, when, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, a wax image of Her Majesty was found in Lincoln's Inn Fields with a pin stuck in the breast; so great was the consternation arising, that a distinguished astronomer was summoned to London to advise on the matter of safeguarding the Queen. Comparatively recently, in the Highlands of Scotland, a Highlander wishing to kill another made a "claybody," and, after sticking nails and pieces of glass into it, placed it in a stream in the hope that, as the "claybody" disintegrated the body of the actual victim would waste away.

Words or magic formulæ uttered by the priests were considered more efficacious when engraved on gold or parchment and worn on the person; hence arose the use of amulets and charms. They are persisted in even to the present time.

For several centuries after the Trojan War early Greek medicine was confined to the temples of Æsculapius. The latter was reputed the son of Apollo and after his medical training under Chiron, he went on the voyage of the *Argonaut*, and, on his return, astonished all men by his medical skill. Zeus struck him with lightning at the request of Pluto, who complained that he was defrauding Hades of its inhabitants. He was raised to Heaven and deified as the god of healing. The treatment of the Asclepiads, although associated with religious rites and magic, was based on common-sense. The temples were always built in very healthy surroundings and cleanliness, plain diet, fresh air and tranquility were of the routine treatment. Following the fathers of the Babylonian-Assyrian culture, the Greeks attached great importance to dreams, and the gods were considered to give directions through these. In "the Temple sleep," the patient, after propitiating the gods by an appropriate gift, was required to spend the night in the temple and his dream contained the advice of the gods, but the priests were required to interpret it; should the patient not have a dream, then the priest produced one. The advent of the Ionian philosophy brought the birth of scientific thought and a transient era of rational medicine began. In the year 460 B.C. Hippocrates proclaimed that disease was not of supernatural origin and placed the responsibility of illness not on the gods but on man himself. This wonderful man, who is said to have lived for more than a hundred years, did more than anyone to further the progress of medicine until the time of Lister. He was the first physician to differentiate diseases; he recognised the signs of tuberculosis and he treated it by rest and sunshine in the hills. He attached great importance to "pronia," or knowing things about your patient before you are told. In spite of the dawn of scientific medicine, magic and superstition continued to flourish, for the priests realised that belief in the material explanation of the origin of

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